

R E M A R K S
ON THE
INTERNAL EVIDENCES
OF THE
CHRISTIAN RELIGION:

BY
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*None of the Wicked shall understand,
But the Wise shall understand.*

Daniel xii. 10.

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IF the Reader should find any Thing in the following Pages, that tends to confirm his Opinion of the Truth and Excellence of Christianity, his Obligations are due to the Rev. THOMAS WAKEFIELD of Richmond in Surrey, at whose Instigation these Remarks were put together, and to whom they are cordially inscribed by his

Affectionate Brother

THE AUTHOR.

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THE AUTHOR

INTERNAL EVIDENCES

OF THE TRUTH AND EXCELLENCE OF

CHRISTIANITY.

IT is a *beatthen* Maxim of high Antiquity, that a *great Book is a great Evil*: and the wisest of the King's of *Israel* has observed with no less Justice, that *of making many Books there is no End*. The Benefit and Convenience of an Author and the Public would be equally consulted, if the Spirit of these Aphorisms were punctually regarded. Should the Sense and Learning of an Age be estimated by the Number of its literary Productions, the Generation, in which we live, would rank higher on the Scale of Letters than the most accomplished Nations

of the World : the Genius of *Athens* and of *Rome* would bow down before us. But, if *intrinsic Excellence* and *Novelty of Information* must decide the Claim of Merit, we should, I am convinced, find ourselves degraded to a much lower Point than most would be willing to believe. For my Part, I am resolved, neither to misemploy my own Time nor to abuse my Reader by retailing the Fruits of another's Labour and Ingenuity ; and therefore the following *Remarks on the internal Evidences of Christianity* will be found, to the best of my Knowledge, either entirely *new*, or, where the Subject has been already treated, as *concise* as possible.* Thus may we act not only a more fair and honourable Part to our Predecessors and the Community, but more effectually contribute also to the Advancement of solid Learning and our own Reputation. †

* I would adopt the Maxim of *Ulysses* :

----- εχθρον δε μοι εστιν
 Αυτις αριζηλως ειρημαεναι μυθολογευειν.

† Ετερο δ' εξ ελεγε σοφο,
 Το τε παλαι το τε νυν· ηδε γαρ ρησίου
 Αρρητων επων πυλας εξευρειν.

I will

I will premise a *Remark*, not decisive indeed, but of considerable Importance and extensive Application.

R E M A R K I.

IF the Books of the *New Testament* be the Production of Imposture, the Forgers of them were JEWS:—these Writings *cannot* have been invented by any Man, or Set of Men, of any *other Nation* whatsoever.—This Observation at least brings the Question into a narrower Compass, and contracts the Ground upon which our infidel Antagonist must take his Stand.

Not to mention the extreme *Difficulty*, or rather the *Impossibility*, of personating, without the grossest Errors, a Character connected with the Mention of *celebrated Men*, *Times*, *Places*, and other *specific* Circumstances, without Number; not, I say, to insist on these Peculiarities, I make no Scruple to maintain, that every Man, conversant with the Writers of Antiquity, and endowed with the least critical Perception of Stile and Phraseology, must acknowledge

at once the Mode of Composition in the *New Testament* to wear a Complexion essentially distinct from that of all other Writings whatsoever, except those of *Jews*, and such as have been modelled by the same Standard. No competent Judge will venture to controvert this Position.

The *religious Sentiments* of the *Hebrews* were very different from those of any other ancient People: their *religious Institutions* were the daily Employment of their Lives, and the Study of their *religious Writings* the perpetual Engagement and Obligation of particular Sects among them. This People was indeed a *Nation of Priests*. The whole Current of their Ideas became tinged of course with religious Images, and incorporated the Colour imbibed from this Source, with the whole Texture of their Actions, Writings, and Conversation. Their Stile of Composition, therefore, and their Cast of Thought, are peculiarly their own; characteristically distinguished from any *Greek* or *Roman* Author, that can be mentioned.

But the Pertinency and Force of this *preliminary Remark* will be best understood by a particular Illustration of it. None but a *Jew*, for Example, would have conceived
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such a Relation as the following in *such* Terms.

Now there is at Jerusalem by the Sheep-Market a Pool, which is called in the Hebrew Tongue Bethesda, having five Porches.

In these lay a great Multitude of impotent Folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the Moving of the Water.

*For an ANGEL went down at a certain Season into the Pool, and troubled the Water: whosoever then first after the Troubling of the Water stepped in, was made whole of whatsoever Disease he had.**

The Pool, or Spring, here spoken of I suppose to have been like those mentioned by *Herodotus* and *Pliny*, to whom I refer the Reader;† such indeed as Travellers of our own Times often mention, That warmth and occasional Fluctuation, which a *Greek* or *Roman* Historian would have accounted for upon the *philosophical Principles* of his own peculiar System,‡ a Jew, who was

* John v. 2—5.

† Herod. iv. 181. Plin. Nat. Hist. ii. 97. 103. xxxi. 1. 4.

‡ See the *Scholiast* on Apoll. Rhod. iii. 225. Lucret. vi. 854.

accustomed

accustomed to ascribe every Event to the *immediate Agency* of his *Jehovah*, *naturally* attributes to the Operation of an ANGEL : a Mode of Solution, which could not possibly occur but to a Disciple of the Law of *Moses*.—And, let me add, this Idea of the particular Interference of the Deity seems to have been more than usually predominant in those Times, which approximate to the *Æra*, in which we believe the *Apostles* to have lived. What the original History, in it's Account of those Animals, which accompanied *Noah* in the Ark, relates in the following simple Language,—*Two of every Sort shall come unto thee to keep them alive ;**—the *Chaldee Paraphrases* of *Jonathan* and *Jerusalem* dignify with this observable Addition : *Two of each shall go in unto thee BY THE HAND OF AN ANGEL, who will take them, and make them go in unto thee to keep them alive.* And more Examples of this Form of Speech might be easily produced.

Nonnus, who is referred by *Chronologers* to the *fifth Century*, and who executed a Paraphrase of *St. John's Gospel* in Greek Verse, has given such a Representation of

* Gen. vi. 20.

this Transaction, as might naturally be expected from one, desirous to throw a *classic* Air over his Performance, and to maintain a Consistency with *their* Modes of Thinking, whose Language he adopted. "A Pool," says he, "where the feverish Person, seeing the Water bubble up with SPONTANEOUS MOTION, washed away his Distemper in the warm Stream."

Nor, I apprehend, would our *Evangelist*, had he not been educated in *Jewish* Principles, have exhibited, with the same Fact before him, a Narrative materially different from that of his poetical Expositor, divested of his Embellishments. The Assertion, that—*Whosoever first stepped in after the Troubling of the Water, was made whole of whatsoever Disease he had*—goes no further, in my Opinion, than a mere Declaration of the *reputed* Efficacy of that mineral Spring, for the strict Truth of which our History is by no Means responsible: and the *Descent of an Angel* was the obvious unavoidable Solution of such a *Phænomenon* to a Mind nurtured in the *Jewish* System of *Theology*. So that the Example here alledged, not only illustrates and supports the previous Argument, but may be proposed as a Specimen of LIBERAL INTERPRETATION of the Scriptures,

Scriptures, grounded upon a suitable Apprehension of the Value of *Hebrew* Phraseology : and such an Interpretation, as will appear on a competent Estimation, not less unexceptionable in itself, than calculated to place many important Passages of the *Jewish* and *Christian* Revelations beyond the Reach of *Sciolists* and *Sceptics* of all Denominations.

R E M A R K II.

NO candid Mind can desire, and no Ingenuity could devise, a more convincing Demonstration of the Truth of the Gospel, than the SUPERLATIVE PRE-EMINENCE of its MORALITY above the Doctrines of *Gentile* Philosophy and the Deductions of what is usually called *natural Religion*.

This Topic, I am aware, has been amply discussed by a Variety of Writers more able and patient and industrious than myself. It remains, therefore, for me only to exhibit the Statement of this Argument in it's true Point of View ; which is indeed very striking, and well worthy of Attention.

The Precepts of *Christianity*, respecting the Regulation of our Lives in every Branch of Duty,

Duty, not only excel in Sublimity of Sentiment and in Suitableness to this proper End, the Refinement of the Heart and the Exaltation of the human Character to the highest Point attainable by rational Intelligence; not only excel, I say, in these Respects the Morality of any *single* Philosopher of Antiquity, but the concentrated Wisdom of *every* Moralist and Philosopher of *every* Age and Nation. This surely is a prodigious Consideration, and constitutes an irresistible Force of Evidence. At the same Time there is no Hazard, no Rashness, in this Assertion; no Fear of incurring an Imputation of groundless Confidence or childish Partiality. The Field is open to the Unbeliever; the Diligence and Wit of Ages have been employed in furnishing him with Armour for the Combat: the Challenge is made in Form, and the Contest is capable of Decision. But it were vain to expect from him an open Engagement on such unequal Terms. He knows too well, that our *Galilean* has brought down from the Skies what *Socrates*, inferior only to the *Galilean*, wished for, but wished in vain.

But one fallacy, which has probably misled the Understandings of many on this Subject, must not be passed by undetected. Produce

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me the Man, who can justly claim a Superiority, in native Edowments and the Accomplishments of Learning, to the *Platos*, the *Aristotles*, the *Xenophons*, the *Tullies* of Greece and Rome? Is that within the Compass of *his* Intellect, which these Heroes were unable to attain?—To form a *true* Judgement, therefore, of the Powers of *unassisted* Reason and the Progress of *natural Religion*, we ought to recur to those Systems of *Morality*, which existed BEFORE the Birth of *Christianity*. THEY ALONE are the reasonable Specimens of *those* Powers;—the genuine Proof of *that* Progress. The various Schemes of *moral Philosophy*, which have been devised, or rather drawn up, beneath the Sunshine of the Gospel, have received too much Illumination from that Source to pass with considerate Examiners for a proper Test of the Abilities of Man, unaided by Revelation. Educated under those benign Influences, which *Christianity* has exerted on Life and Manners, we have imperceptibly imbibed a Portion of it's vivifying Spirit; and easily mistake that for an Effulgence of *native Light*, which is but a *Reflection* of a brighter Luminary, unobserved from a long Familiarity with it's Effects. The Fountain of living Waters first flowed
indeed

indeed only in *Judea*; but has since dispersed Rivulets of Health and Vigour through every Region of the Universe. Nay, further; the purer Morality of the later *Grecian* Schools, and the striking Superiority in the Theories of modern Times over those of the old Philosophers, afford of themselves an incontrovertible Proof, that the *Waters of Israel* far transcend in salutary Virtues all the *Rivers of Damascus*.

But, I will state the Question, and much it behoves the *deistical Speculator* to give an Answer to it:

COULD the Son of a *Carpenter*—could a Tribe of *Fishermen*—thus outstrip the WHOLE ASSEMBLAGE of illustrious PHILOSOPHERS, and advance *Morality* to Perfection by a SINGLE EFFORT?

R E M A R K III.

IF the moral *Satirist* could say with Propriety of the philosophical Maxim, *know thyself*, that it *came down from Heaven*;* with much more Justice may the Advocates of

* Juv. xi. 27.

Christianity put in the Claim of celestial Extraction for this Injunction of its Founder :

*A new Commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another ; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. **

A Precept of such sublime Benevolence, which enjoins even the Sacrifice of Life itself in the Cause of Friendship, † could only proceed from the overflowing Fountain of universal and unbounded Love. For any other Source I look round in vain. ‡ The History of our Species from the Beginning of the World to this Hour,—the Systems of Philosophers,—the Theory of the human Mind,—the Deductions of Experience,—ALL unite in riveting me to *this* Solution. What fabulous Antiquity in that *single* Instance || of their *Pylades* and *Orestes* could extol with such Excess of Panegyric, *Jesus of Nazareth* not only accomplished in his own Person with every Circumstance that could ennoble such a sublime Display of Love and Friendship, but requires also of his Disciples as the genuine Test of their Adherence to his Cause, and their worthy Profession of his

* John xiii. 34.

† John xv. 13.

‡ See John v. 19. Col. ii. 9. || Mamil. ii. 583.

Name.

Name. In this respect even the Law of *Moses* will bear no Competition with the Gospel :* and all other Founders of Sects, in every Age and Nation,† have mixed with their Systems, in a greater or less Portion, some Bitterness of *Party Zeal*,—some Leaven of *excluding* and *persecuting Principles*.—And alas ! how little have even his Followers profited, either by the Example, or the Commandment of their Master ! Those Disorders of the Heart, which his Love was ever assiduous to heal by *pouring in Oil and Wine*, his false Disciples have so inflamed by Animosities and Hatred, that, in some Periods of *Christianity*, the Body of his *Church* has been little else than *Wound, and Bruise, and running Sore*.‡

Next to this Doctrine of *unlimited Benevolence*, in Dignity and Usefulness, and alike demonstrative of the *superior Endowments* of its Author, is that of the *Forgiveness of Injuries*.

* Matt. v. 43. Juv. xiv. 103.

† *Solo's* Benevolence was of a *Judaical Complexion* :

Εἶπαι δὲ γλυκύν ὡς φίλοις, ἐχθροῖσι δὲ πικρὸν :

Τοῖσι μὲν αἰδοῖον, τοῖσι δὲ δεινὸν ἰδεῖν.

‡ II. i. 6.

B

Peter

Peter said : Lord, how oft shall my Brother sin against me, and I forgive him ? Till seven Times ?

*Jesus saith unto him : I say not unto thee, until seven Times, but until seventy Times seven.**

Every Reader of Sensibility and Taste, at the same Time that his *Heart burns within him* at the Magnanimity of the *Preceptor*, must be delighted with the *Language* of the *Precept*, redolent of the Simplicity and Purity of ancient Times, and proclaiming, beyond the Reach of Art, and even the Suspicion of Spuriousness, the Legitimacy of it's Extraction.

The *Parable* too, by which this noble Precept is enforced, is exquisitely beautiful and engaging ; the undoubted Production of a Mind intimately acquainted with the human Heart. Should the Deist, like *Baal's* Prophets, call upon his *natural Religion* for such *Proofs* of *divine Wisdom*, such Specimens of sublime Morality, from *Morning until Noon* ; there would be no Voice, no Answer given. If *Moses* will acknowledge the Superiority of our *Christian Lawgiver*,

* Matt. xviii. 21. 22.

much more must the Disciples of *natural Religion* decline the contest. But the *Hebrew Teacher* has *already* borne an unaffected Testimony to the transcendent Merits of the Prophet of *Nazareth*, by the Mouth of the *Jewish Officers*, who were sent to apprehend our Lord: NEVER MAN SPAKE LIKE THIS MAN.*

R E M A R K IV.

AN admired Ancient has observed with no less Propriety than Beauty, that "the Word of *Truth* is recommended by it's *Simplicity*; and requires no Subtleties of Argument, no Embellishments of Rhetoric, to produce Conviction."† Truth is in Unison with the constitutional Movements of our Nature, and takes an instantaneous Possession of the Heart.

In *this View* the *Doctrines* of the *Gospel* demand our highest Admiration. They are

* John vii. 46.

† Eurip. Phæn. 483.

Ἀπλᾶς ὁ μὺθὸς τῆς ἀληθείας ἐστίν,
Κόου ποικιλῶν δει τάνδιχ' ἐρμηνευμάτων.

propounded in Terms of the utmost possible Simplicity ; and are accompanied by Motives so plain, so reasonable, and so cogent, as to speak with irresistible Emphasis of Persuasion to every Mind, not adulterated by *Sophistry*, nor depraved by *Vice*.

The universal Rule of human Conduct, delivered by our Lord, is CONCISE and FULL ; liable to no Mistake or Misapplication.

*Whatsoever ye would that Men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them.**

Nor are subordinate Duties enforced with less Pregnancy and Decision.

Servants, be obedient to your Masters, doing Service as to the Lord, and not to Men.†

Masters, give unto your Servants that which is just and equal ; knowing that ye also have a Master in Heaven.‡

I shall not multiply Words in defending or explaining a Position, which is level to every Understanding, and will find an Advocate in every Breast. The Charms of Truth are impaired by Decorations.

* Matt. vii. 12.

† Eph. vi. 5, 7.

‡ Col. iv. 1.

R E M A R K V.

CAN any Doctrine be conceived more truly noble in itself, more interesting to human Nature, and more calculated to inspire great Ideas of the *Power* and *Goodness* of the *Deity*, than the Declaration of God's *indiscriminate* and *perpetual Providence* over the *Universe*;—over all inanimate and living Things? But, if the *Philosopher* contemplates with Astonishment the Sublimity of this *Idea*, the *Philologist* is no less delighted with the Energy and Plainness of the *Language*, in which it is conveyed.

*Are not two Sparrows sold for a Farthing?
And one of them shall not fall on the Ground
without your Father. But the very Hairs of
your Head are all numbered.**

Which is the more predominant Feature in this striking Picture of the supreme Being, the *Affection* of the *Parent*, or the *Power* of the *Creator*? — What, let me ask, What

* Matt. x. 29, 30.

could proclaim such glad and awful Tidings but a Voice from *the Bosom of the Father*? *

"GOD," says Newton,† "is all EYE, and EAR, and SENSE." But this Prince of Philosophers, this Glory of our Nation, refined his Notions of the Divinity from his favourite Volume; which had declared, that a *Sparrow*, nay even a *Hair of the Head*, could not *fall to the Ground* without vibrating through the remotest Corner of the Creation,

R E M A R K VI.

NOR need the most sanguine Admirer of *Christianity* desire a more decisive Demonstration of the *divine Understanding* of its Founder, a sharper Weapon against the Fury of his Adversaries, than the Symptoms of Wisdom, which display themselves in the following little History, delineated with such lively Strokes of Truth and Nature.

Then one said unto him: Behold! thy Mother and thy Brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee.

* John i. 18.

† Schol. Gen,

But

But he answered and said unto him that told him: Who is my Mother? and who are my Brethren?

*And he stretched forth his Hand towards his Disciples, and said: Behold, my Mother and my Brethren! For whosoever shall do the Will of my Father, which is in Heaven, the same is my Brother, and Sister, and Mother.**

The Religion of *Jesus* opposes no Dictate of our Constitution, discourages no Sensibility of Nature, dissolves no Tie of Kindred or Affection. But our *heavenly* Father is of more Consideration than our *earthly*; and the Claims of Integrity and Virtue are superior and antecedent even to the dearest Attachments of Consanguinity, whether of *Wife*, or *Child*, or *Parent*.† The full, unequivocal, and decisive Declaration of this grand Truth was reserved for *Jesus Christ*, the Word and Wisdom of the Creator. But Impartiality requires, that a Philosopher of *Greece*, whose Sagacity of Penetration and Variety of Learning have never been excelled, should not be defrauded of his Share of praise. *Aristotle*, in a beautiful Hymn to VIRTUE,

* Matt. xii. 47.

† Luke xiv. 26.

had pronounced her to be of *more Worth than GOLD and PARENTS.**

What shall we say to this? Truly, that *Philosophy* approximates by the same Measure to the *Perfection* of *Morality* and to the *Precepts* of the *Gospel*; and that the *wisest Heathens*, are more and more, in Proportion to their Excellence as Teachers of Virtue, *almost* and *altogether* CHRISTIANS,

R E M A R K VII.

The Love of Money, says the Apostle, *is the Root of all Evil.*† And a very superficial Acquaintance with Life and Manners must convince us of the Power of that fordid Passion to corrupt every Principle of Virtue, and to deaden the most active Affections of our Nature. “Curfed be the Man,” says the voluptuous *Anacreon*, “who first set his Affections upon MONEY. This destroys the Love of Brethren: this extinguishes the reciprocal Regard of Parent and of Child: this is the Source of War

* Χρυσὴ ἡ πρῶτος καὶ γονεὺς.

† 1 Tim. vi. 10.

“ and

“and Murder.” Energy of Language laudably expressive of the Detestation of a generous Spirit for such a groveling Appetite † an Appetite, which gradually absorbs every *social Feeling* of the Soul, and converts the unhappy Indulger of it into a Monster of *Selfishness* and *Inhumanity*. Our Saviour proved himself to have a clear Insight into it’s incredible Influence upon the Mind; and has signified that total Indisposition to the Fruits of Religion and Goodness, which is it’s uniform and legitimate Offspring, by one of those striking Specimens of figurative Expression, so familiar to the Phraseology of the East :

*It is easier for a Camel to go through the Eye of a Needle, than for a rich Man to enter into the Kingdom of God.**

This may serve as a satisfactory Proof among a Multitude of others, that the favourite Disciple was not blinded in his Judgement by any groundless Partiality for his Master, when he asserted of him, that HE KNEW WHAT WAS IN MAN. †

* Matt. xix. 24.

† John ii. 25.

R E M A R K VIII.

THE following Position has appeared to many, no Doubt, perfectly unwarrantable, and destitute of all reasonable Probability: upon more mature Consideration, however, it will be found strictly conformable to Experience, and an undeniable Demonstration of a most accurate Insight into human Manners.

And he said: nay, Father Abraham! but, if one went unto them from the Dead, they will repent.

*And he said unto him: If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the Dead.**

Nothing so clear and unquestionable, as that a Disinclination to be persuaded will always find some Cavil, some secret Objection, to the strongest Argument. It is impossible to contradict a Proposition, of which perpetual Experience furnishes to every Observer such abundant and irrefragable Proof.

* Luke xvi. 30, 31.

It is certain, that more must go to Conviction, than *Reason* and *Demonstration*. There is no access to the Avenues of the Understanding through a Heart enveloped and stupified by the gross Integuments of Sin.* It is the *purged Ear* alone, that listens; and the *single Ear*, that delights to see. *Light* may come into the World, but Men will love *Darkness* rather than *Light*, if their DEEDS ARE EVIL.†

I might be more particular in my Illustration of this Assertion of our Lord; but the Subject has been treated with Ability and Success by others. In the mean Time, a Believer of the Gospel, will congratulate himself on a DEMONSTRATION from FACT of the Truth of this Maxim, soon after it was uttered. That *perverse Generation*, who could hear with so much Indifference or Contempt the Exhortations and Reproofs of their heavenly Instructor, and behold with such obstinate Incredulity so many Exhibitions of godlike Power; still continued to resist the

* See Matt. xiii. 15. Perf. Sat. III. 32.

*Sed stupet hic vitio, et fibris increvit opimum
Pingue.*

† John iii. 19.

same unequivocal Proofs, openly exhibited by the Apostles, of the Resurrection of that same *Jesus*, whom they had crucified, from the Dead.

Obduracy has no Limit to its Progress. The *Cloud*, which was at first no bigger than a *Man's Hand*, soon involves the whole Heavens in Obscurity. In such a Case, no Alternative can be discovered. The Conduct of our Lord will ever shew itself in *this* Respect also perfectly consonant to the Principles of consummate WISDOM.* *This* was the invariable Tenour of his Conduct; *this* the uniform Language of his Address: WHOSO HATH EARS TO HEAR, LET HIM HEAR.†

R E M A R K IX.

THE *Christian* Religion soon began to deviate from the plain and exact Standard set forth by *Jesus* and his *Apostles*; and secular Policy to exert it's baneful Interference in

* Matt. xi. 19.

† It is sensibly remarked by *Philemon*:

Χαλεπον ακροάτης ασυνείϋ καθημενϋ.

Τπο γαρ ανοιως εχ, εαυτον μεμφεται.

the

the Government of a Kingdom, which was expressly declared by it's Establisher not to be OF THIS WORLD.* *Antichrist*, according to the Prophecies concerning him, made Haste to usurp a Throne in *the Temple of God*,† and to promulgate Laws with a Tone of tyrannical Authority. This simple Requisite of evangelical Communion—I believe that *Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God*—might satisfy indeed *that Son of God* himself and the Messengers, whom he commissioned; but was deemed in no wise sufficient by the succeeding *Hierarchs* of the Church. They were of Opinion truly, in Opposition to their Master, that an unbounded *Liberty of Prophecy* must produce innumerable *Corruptions* in Religion; and that TRUTH would be unable to support herself without the salutary Assistance of *Penalties* and *Restrictions*. Accordingly an Accession of new Materials, of *Wood* and *Hay* and *Stubble*‡ was thought necessary to give *Strength* and *Solidity* to the Foundation of that Fabric, which was already established on a *Rock*, Palpable *Injustice* and a sacrilegious *Usurpa-*

* John xviii. 36.

† 2 Theff. ii. 4.

‡ 1 Cor. iii. 12.

tion of the divine Prerogative were regarded as Expedients of *trivial* Consideration, when contrasted with the *Possibility* of Mischief from a perfect Freedom of Opinion. Nay, upon a Subject immediately allied to this; *Milton's Discourse on the Liberty of the Press* is declared by a Writer of as strong Faculties as our own or any other Nation has produced, to have occasioned a *Problem in Politics*, which the *human* Understanding cannot solve.*

Where then can we so properly have Recourse for the Solution of a Difficulty, that mocks the Capacity of the wisest Men, as to that DIVINE UNDERSTANDING, so conspicuously exerted in the Words and Actions of JESUS CHRIST?

Hear, ye Tyrants over the Consciences of *another's Servants*, who must *stand or fall to their own Master*;† hear the Decision of your Lord, and confute us, if ye can:

* See *Archdeacon Blackburne's* Strictures on *Dr. Johnson's Life of Milton*: a most acute Performance, and a surprising Instance of intellectual Vigour in extreme Old-Age! Our illustrious Bard could not have found a more able Advocate. *His saltè m accumulem donis!*

† Rom. xiv. 4.

a Decision,

a Decision, fraught with *the Wisdom from above*, to the complete Exposure of your absurd Expedients, and the eternal Confusion of *anticristian* Policy.

LET BOTH GROW TOGETHER, UNTIL THE HARVEST; LEST, WHILE YE GATHER UP THE TARES, YE ROOT UP THE WHEAT ALSO WITH THEM.*

R E M A R K X.

IF we consider the Conduct of other Founders of Sects and Heads of Parties; —the Means, which *they* have uniformly employed to procure Reputation and to allure Followers, the Mode of acting and teaching adopted by *Jesus Christ* will appear in this Respect perfectly peculiar and without Example. No Forgers of the Narratives (whose Motives in the first Instance would not easily be made out) could have found any Inducement, either from a Survey of human Manners or the invariable Operations of the Mind, to have delivered such an ex-

* Matt. xiii. 29, 30.

traordinary

traordinary Relation of his Conduct. For my own Part, I can devise no other tolerable Solution of this Difficulty, but the Supposition, that the *Gospel History* is an accurate *Transcript* from a TRUE ORIGINAL ;—that such a Person as *Jesus of Nazareth* actually appeared, a genuine Likeness of the Picture, which is presented of him ;—with a View of publishing *such* a System of Religion, and founding *such* a singular Empire over the Affections and Consciences of Men.

Did *Jesus* soothe his Followers by ostentatious Promises of Wealth, Power, Reputation, or temporal Advantages of any Kind? No such Thing. The first and essential Qualification of his Disciples was to relinquish every worldly Expectation, and abandon for ever the very Idea, not of Power and Reputation, but even of Ease and Comfort. After his Example, who had not *where to lay his Head* ;—who endured every Hardship, Danger, and Persecution on his Way to *Calvary*, where the bitter Cup of his Afflictions was emptied to the Dregs ;—after such a Pattern, the Followers also of this Master were required to leave *House*, and *Land*, and *Parent*, and *Child*, for *his Name's*

*Name's Sake**— to expect all the ill Treatment, which the Malice and Bigotry of their Countrymen could exercise upon them—to endure with Patience those *cruel Mockings*, which have proved to some a severer Trial than even personal Oppressions—and to look daily, with a fearful Expectation, inseparable from Humanity, for that same *Baptism* of Death, with which he himself had been *baptised*.†

Our Lord also, on every Occasion, most studiously avoided *popular Applause*; reprov'd with Severity and Boldness before all the People those Professors, whose Name and Influence would have been the most serviceable in promoting his Interest and establishing his Authority; and retired with secret Precipitation before that Torrent of public Enthusiasm, which would have carried him to a Throne.‡

By what Model, I ask our Adversaries, by what Model could an Impostor fashion such a Narrative as this? What Principle of *Experience*, what Analogy of *History*, what Motive of *human Action*, could furnish him

* Matt. x. 37.

† Matt. xx. 22.

‡ John vi. 15.

with a fuitable Foundation for a Superstructure so unexampled in all its Parts ?

Until a direct and explicit Answer can be given to this Question, as *sound Philosophy* has taught me not to admit *more* Causes than what are sufficient for the Explanation of the *Phænomena*, I feel myself compelled to conclude, that the Life and Actions of *Jesus Christ*, correspondent to the Record transmitted of them, were the undoubted *Prototype* in the Eye of the *Evangelists*; and that he was *a Man, approved of God by Miracles, and Wonders, and Signs*, and rose from the Grave on the third Day, after he had been *by wicked Hands crucified and slain.**

R E M A R K X I.

THE *Mode* of conveying *Instruction*, adopted by our Lord displays, in my opinion, a wonderful Combination of Judgement and Sagacity, and is in every Respect worthy of a Teacher *sent from God*.

In this View, what can be more admirable, than that Dexterity and Address, which

* Acts ii. 22—25.

uniformly endeavoured to call forth the *reasoning Faculties* of his Audience, and to lead them to a due Exertion of those Powers, which characterise and ennoble our Species?

When he wished to restore a bed-ridden *Paralytic* to Health and Strength,* it were easy for him to say, *Arise and walk*; and the Miracle would have been complete. But his constant Object was the Accomplishment of *all* the Good within his Power. To an Act of Benevolence to the *Body*, he was willing to unite an Effort to inform the *Mind*, by calling the Attention of the By-Standers to the Nature of his Character. His Language, therefore, to the sick Person was, *Son! thy Sins be forgiven thee*: A Peculiarity of Expression, which might have induced any inquisitive and ingenuous Hearer to conclude, that he claimed, by Virtue of a heavenly Commission, that high Prerogative of the Divinity, *the Forgiveness of Sins*: and the Miracles, which he was enabled to perform ought to have convinced them at the same Time, that he did not exercise this Prerogative upon *false* Pretensions; for *no Man*, according to the just Acknowledge-

* Matt. ix. 2—7.

ment of the *Jewish Ruler*, *could do such Things, except God were with him.**

All his *Parables* furnish abundant Proofs of the Justice of this *Remark*, and may be considered as so many judicious Lessons drawn up with infinite Address, calculated to rouse the Understandings and affect the Sensibility of his Hearers by the most delicate Touches of Nature and Passion. Indeed, we might almost venture to appeal for the Authenticity of our Lord's Pretensions, to his PARABLES ALONE: *All* are beautiful; the truest Delineation of human Manners, embellished with all those Graces, which an unaffected lovely Simplicity of Diction is able to bestow; Graces, beyond the Reach of the most elaborate Artifice of Composition: but *two* of the Number shine among the Rest with unrivalled Splendor; and we may safely challenge the Genius of Antiquity to produce from all his Stores of Elegance and Beauty such Specimens of pathetic unlaboured Description as the *Parables of the Prodigal Son* and *the good Samaritan*.

But I forbear to enlarge upon this Subject. The Gospel is in every Body's Hands; and

* John iii. 2.

the ingenuous Student of the Scriptures will find in every Page sufficient Testimonials to the Truth of my Proposition. Let him make the Application for himself, and build up his Faith with those Materials, which are laid before him.

R E M A R K XII.

THE Reception, which the many insidious Contrivances and the premeditated Sophistry of the learned Professors among the Jews never failed to meet with from our Saviour, evinced a Tranquillity of Temper, which no Provocation could derange; a Quickness of Recollection, which no Artifice could surprize; a Sagacity of Apprehension, a Solidity of Understanding, which no Subtleties could confound.

When the *Pharisees* ascribed his miraculous Operations to the Assistance of evil Spirits, with what Simplicity and Strength of Reasoning did he expose the despicable Inconsistency and malignant Prejudices of these miserable Cavillers! *A Family, divided against itself, cannot stand*—"If my Miracles are the Work
"of *Beelzebub*, by whose Power do your

“Disciples pretend to work them?” —
 “Whofo entereth a strong Man's House, and
 “plundereth his Goods, is stronger than
 “he.” * *and is stronger than he.*

But without descending to an Enumeration of Particulars, which are so well known, I shall content myself with directing the Attention of the Reader to the Story of *the Woman taken in Adultery*. †

The Difficulty and Danger of the Dilemma, to which our Lord was reduced on this embarrassing Occasion, are extremely obvious. To have pronounced an Acquittal of the Woman would have been not only a flagrant Opposition to the express Injunction of the *Mosaic Law* upon this Point, but such a palpable Encouragement of Criminality, as must have totally destroyed his Credit as a moral Teacher among his countrymen. On the other Hand, though no *judicial Authority* as a public Magistrate was invested in him, yet his Popularity would have given

* Matt. xii. 25, 30, Luke xi. 22.

To the same Purpose *Menander* in *Clem. Alex.*

----- ΕΙ ΓΑΡ ΕΛΝΕΙ ΤΟΝ ΘΕΟΝ
 ΤΟΙΣ ΚΥΒΑΛΟΙΣ ΑΝΘΡΩΠΟΥ ΕΙΣ Ο ΒΥΒΛΕΙΝΑΙ,
 Ο ΤΕΛΟΣ ΠΟΙΩΝ ΕΣΤΙ ΜΕΙΖΩΝ ΤΩ ΘΕΩ.

† John viii. 3—12,

his

his Determination the Efficacy of a legal Sentence, and the Populace, in all Probability, would have proceeded immediately to execute the Punishment of their Legislator by stoning the Criminal to Death. Now the Tumult itself unavoidable in this Case, and much more such an Infringement of the Authority of the *Roman* Government, which had taken the Power of inflicting capital Punishments into their own Hands, would have furnished a very fair Pretence for an Accusation of Sedition and Rebellion against the State. What Measures could be pursued in such a trying Situation? And what Ingenuity would not have felt itself at a Loss for an Expedient that might secure it's own Reputation, disappoint the Malice of it's Adversaries, and yet give no Encouragement to such a sinful Act? Observe then, whether our Lord did not display a Presence of Mind and a Dexterity of Invention, which Nothing can exceed. LET HIM, says he, *that is without Sin among you, cast the first Stone at her.*

Few Words, but fruitful Materials for Reflection! — Those sanctified Hypocrites, the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, hereby received a just Rebuke for their uncharitable Eagerness to

accuse others, when they themselves were immersed in Depravity. The Arrow reached the Consciences, to which it was directed. Their subsequent Conduct bore Testimony to it's Effect. *They went out one by one.**

Yet our Lord gave no Sanction to *Adultery*. The Woman's Guilt is clearly acknowledged, when Leave is given to the *Innocent* to put the Law into Execution against her. The Inability of her Adversaries to accept this Condition does not prove, or imply, *her* Innocence in the Judgement of our Saviour. The Infidel can make out no just Exception to his Character upon this Ground. Indeed, he expressly tells the Woman to go and *SIN* no more.

But our Antagonist will object; "he does not condemn her"—*Neither do I condemn thee:*—"And this," he will add, "amounts "at least to an unpardonable Connivance "at her Transgression." To this it may be replied in the first Place, that *he came not,*

* *Them thus intent Ithuriel with his Spear
Touch'd lightly, for no Falsehood can endure
Touch of celestial Temper, but returns
Of Force to it's own Likeness: up they start
Discover'd and surpris'd.*

Par. Lost, iv. 810.

according

according to his own Declaration, *into the World to condemn the World*,* and to execute the Office of a Judge : (and it is but reasonable to try him by his own Principles ; in which no Inconsistency can be found)—And in the *next* Place, any Exercise of judicial Authority would have given a direct Contradiction to that Deference and Subordination, which he constantly shewed, and inculcated, to the Power of the civil Magistrate.

But I pass on to other Considerations.

REMARK XIII.

ANOTHER Incident, though trivial in itself, supplies us with no insignificant Testimonial of a Nobleness of Mind, which will not suffer any selfish Considerations whatsoever to interfere with the Respect antecedently due to Propriety and Merit. Sensible as our Lord must have been of *Martha's* officious Assiduity to oblige him by providing a Variety of Dishes for his Entertainment,†

* John iii. 17. viii. 15. xii. 47. Luke xii. 14.—27.

† Luke x. 38.

his superior Love of intrinsic Excellence made him regard with Sentiments of peculiar Fondness and Approbation the Conduct of her Sister, who was sitting at his Feet, imbibing with an eager fond Attention the gracious Accents, that dropped from the Lips of her Preceptor. The Suggestions of *Vanity* could not soothe this impartial Examiner of Actions into a Suppression of the *Truth*; nor was the steady Light of so sound a Judgement to be broken by the Obliquity of even personal Attachment in Union with those Suggestions. His Approbation of *Mary's* Wisdom comes attended with a Rebuke of her Sister's Indifference to more momentous Objects; but a Rebuke gentle and delicate, suited to the Sensibility of so affectionate a Friend. *

Martha! Martha! thou art careful and troubled about many Things: but one Thing is needful; and Mary hath chosen that good Part, which shall not be taken away from her.

* See John xi. 5.

REMARK

R E M A R K XIV.

THE Acuteness of Understanding, the Firmness of Mind, and the Resignation of Soul to the Will of Providence, manifested in the *Temptation* of our Saviour, constitute one of the most illustrious Transactions in a Life, distinguished by every Species of Magnanimity and Virtue. In whatever Light the *speculative Theologian* may be inclined to view this remarkable Event, whether as a *Vision*, a private *Meditation*, or a *real Action*; the Wisdom and the Fortitude therein displayed will be precisely the *same*: and, if the Unbeliever should regard the Circumstance as a pure Fiction of the Relator, the Difficulty will still pursue him, and require some reasonable Account for such admirable Sagacity and Strength of Argument in a contemptible and uninformed Jew.

When the *Tempter* urged *Jesus* to exert his Power for the Relief of that Necessity, which must have been unusually pressing after so long an Abstinence, he did not deny his Ability to perform the Conversion of *Stones*
into

into Bread, but represented the Propriety of Submission to the Appointments of that Being, who had placed him in such a Situation ; intimating at the same Time the absolute Inefficacy of any Expedient in Opposition to the Intentions of the Almighty. *Man shall not live by Bread alone, but by every Word that proceedeth out of the Mouth of God.**

A sublime Sentiment ! dictating a most serious and useful Lesson to Mankind, and declaratory of his own Determination to obey his Father's Injunctions to the utmost ; to be *poor* himself, that his Followers might be *rich* ; to exert his Powers, not for his own Benefit and Convenience, but for the Good of others ; fainting himself with the Extremity of Hunger, whilst he created Food for Multitudes in a Wilderness.

The next Effort of the *Tempter* was not less insidious, but in Truth a most dangerous Snare for a vain and ambitious Spirit. Had *Jesus* thrown himself down from *the Battlements of the Temple* among the Crowds below, and escaped unhurt by the Protection of the Deity ; such a miraculous Exhibition could not have failed to engage the Attention of

* Matt. iv. 1—11.

the People in his Favour, who are more easily captivated by Acts of *Ostentation* than *Beneficence*; and would have opened a wide Door to any Projects of Ambition. But, notwithstanding the direct Words of *Scripture* were produced in Justification of this Proposal, our Lord was too well acquainted with the Terms of divine Favour and Support, and with the Uses, for which his supernatural Endowments were conferred upon him, to be baffled by such an artful Insinuation. *Thou shalt not tempt,* says he, *the Lord thy God.*

In Conformity with this noble Declaration, *Jesus Christ* was ever cautious to render no Interference of *miraculous Power* necessary in his Behalf. He never gave Way to the enthusiastic Admiration of the Populace, who would have made him King: he provoked no Dangers, (from which only a Miracle might have extricated him) that could possibly bring on that Catastrophe of his Crucifixion before the Hour appointed by his Father: and was satisfied with his *twelve* faithless cowardly Disciples, when he could have called in their Stead as many *Legions of Angels* to his Assistance.

The

The *Tempter* made his last Appeal to that Passion for Power, and Grandeur, and Pleasure, which has domineered with such universal Sway over the Heart of Man in every Period of Time, and daily alienates the Affections of so many Thousands from the *Creator* to the *Creature*. The Apostle has remarked, with equal Truth and Beauty, that *the Lust of the Flesh, and the Lust of the Eyes, and the Pride of Life, is not of the Father, but of the World.** But that *Pestilence*, which destroys, to borrow *Solomon's* Expression, so many strong Men, and spreads perpetual Devastation both in *the Darknefs* and at *Noon-Day*, was unable to communicate it's contaminating Influence to this *Man of God*. The very Idea of forsaking his Allegiance to his Maker (the almost unavoidable Consequence of enjoying *the Kingdoms of the World and the Glory of them*) was unspeakably offensive to this dutiful Son and Servant of the most High. He replies with the Quickness of a wounded and indignant Spirit: *Get thee behind me, Satan! Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.*

* 1 John ii. 16.

I would not willingly entertain an unreasonable Partiality even for the Character of *Jesus Christ* himself; but I should offer Violence to my own Feelings and an Insult to the Truth, did I not ingenuously declare, that his Conduct on almost every Occasion, especially those of *Difficulty* and *Danger*, excites within me a mingled inexpressible Sensation of Astonishment and Delight: My Heart, in the Language of the *Scriptures*, may be truly said *to leap for Joy*. It's inward Emotions correspond to the outward Expressions of the transported Cripple, when he found himself healed by the Word of *Peter*; as they are described in Terms, so lively and significant, as Nothing but *ocular Testimony* could have suggested: *And the lame Man LEAPING UP, STOOD, and WALKED; and entered with them into the Temple, WALKING, and LEAPING, and PRAISING GOD.**

R E M A R K XV.

LET any Man take a Survey of the *Gospel Histories*, and observe the Treatment, which our Lord received from his Country-

* Acts iii. 8.

men on all Occasions in Return for his Endeavours to reclaim *them* from Ignorance and Sin to the Blessings of *evangelical Salvation* :—let him behold this meek and peaceable Prophet of *glad Tidings* insulted for the Meanness of his Parentage, the Obscurity of his native Place, the Insignificance of his Followers, with an Addition, no Doubt, of many aggravating Circumstances not recorded by the brief Historians of his Life :—then turn your Eyes and observe him more than once in Danger of being stoned by an enraged Populace, and concealing himself from their Resentment, for attempting to remove their Prejudices and lead them to an Acknowledgement of the Truth : finally, observe the Scoffs and Ridicule, the Bitterness of Insult, the Brutality of Usage, which the fruitful Malignity of triumphant Enemies lavished upon him after his Apprehension :—but above all, contemplate the taunting Pleasantry of those Monsters of Inhumanity, the *Chief-Priests* and *Scribes* over this innocent Victim of their Malice, whilst he was agonising with the unspeakable Tortures of the Cross :—then, after this Survey, let any Man bring the
Matter

Matter home to his own Bosom, and candidly ask himself, what *his* Sensations would have been in the same Circumstances, in the Midst of suffering these Indignities and Cruelties in Return for *such* Conduct. Surely, without any Breach of Candour, I may presume to answer for him, that *some* Emotions of *Indignation* and *Resentment*,—*some* Symptoms of *human Passion*,—would have arisen in his Breast. At least I will venture to pronounce, that the predominant Sensations of his Soul would *not* have been a calm Composition of Affection, Compassion, and Forgiveness: nor would his Lips have found Leisure, in such Agonies of Body and Perturbation of Spirit, to pronounce a Petition for his *Murderers*: FATHER, FORGIVE THEM; FOR THEY KNOW NOT WHAT THEY DO.*

REMARK XVI.

THE Influence of long and early Affiliations upon the Mind unavoidably produces *some* Attachment to one's *native Country*:

* Luke xxiii. 34.

but a mere *local* Affection seems entitled to no Praise, and is rather incompatible with true Dignity of Sentiment. The Regard, which the great Exemplar of Wisdom in the Legends of Antiquity expresses for his native Island, is, as with most other Men, a Compound of good Sense and Weakness. "My *Ithaca*," says *Ulysses*, "is rough and barren, but a good Nurse of Men: nor have I seen in all my Wanderings a more delicious Country."*

Our Saviour betrayed no Symptoms of unmanly Prejudice in this Respect, but acted up to his invariable Standard of Wisdom and Magnanimity. His Conduct indeed was ever uniform, and like his own Vestment, of the same Texture, *without Seam*, woven from the *Top* throughout. At all Times, a Regard for *Worth* and *Virtue* superseded every Consideration of private Connection with *Place* or *Person*, and called forth his unreserved Commendation.

The *Roman* Centurion, though of a Country and a Class of Men most unfriendly to the *Jews*, displayed a Conviction of our Lord's

* Od. I. 27.

Τρηχεῖ, ἀλλ' ἀγαθὴ καὶροσφοῦ· εἴη ἐγὼ γε
 Ἡς γαίης δυναμαὶ γλυκερώτερον ἄλλο ἰδεσθαι.

supernatural

supernatural Abilities, highly observable and meritorious; a Conviction, which seemed to refresh the Spirits of *Jesus*, wearied out by the Perversity and Obduracy of his own Countrymen. He broke out on this Occasion in the warm Language of Admiration: *Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great Faith, no not in Israel. And I say unto you, that many shall come from the East and West, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven: but the Children of the Kingdom shall be cast out into outer Darknes.*

To those acquainted with *Jewish Antiquities* the inveterate Antipathy of this People and the *Samaritans* is well known. Sufficient Proofs indeed of this Enmity may be found in the *Gospel History* itself. Two of the Disciples, *James* and *John*, had profited so little by the benevolent Précepts, the gentle Dispositions, and the kind Actions of their Master, as to express an Eagerness to call down *Fire from Heaven*† upon a Village of *Samaritans*, who refused to entertain them. — And on another Occasion, the same Disciples were astonished, that he should con-

* Matt. viii. 10—13.

† Luke ix. 52.

verse with a Woman of *Samaria*; and the Woman herself was no less surpris'd: for we are told, that *the Jews had no Dealings with the Samaritans.**

Yet in Opposition to this hereditary and deep-rooted Aversion to each other, our Saviour not only endeavours by Expostulation, and an express Parable to this Purpose, to soften the Animosity and enlarge the Conceptions of his Followers; but seizes every Opportunity of placing the *Samaritans* in the most favourable Point of View, by a direct Contrast with his Countrymen. *Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give Glory to God, save this Stranger.* And he, we are informed, was a *Samaritan.*†

Yet, notwithstanding this Spirit of universal Philanthropy, that pure Flame, which warms and animates the genuine PATRIOT, was not unkindled in the Breast of the Founder of the Gospel. He manifested that Symptom of Affection for his Country, that Specimen of patriotical Solitude, which the moral Sati-rist declares to be the noblest Proof of the

* John iv. 9.

† Luke xvii. 16—19.

Sensations of Humanity.* His Agony of Soul, occasioned by the melancholy Prospect of the impending Desolations of *Judea*, could find no Relief but in a Flood of Tears; † succeeded by this most tender and impassioned Apostrophe: *O! Jerusalem! Jerusalem! thou that killest the Prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee! how often would I have gathered thy Children together even as a Hen gathereth her Chickens under her Wings; and ye would not. ‡*

But the disinterested Magnanimity of the PATRIOT shone forth with a still brighter Blaze at a Time, when the Sensations of Humanity, without incurring any Imputation of Selfishness and Degeneracy, might have been pardonably absorbed in the Contemplation of it's own Calamities. But *Jesus of Nazareth* thought and acted, lived and died for the Good of OTHERS. His Heart, which was truly *human*, sympathising with

* Juv. Sat. xv. 131.

----- *mollissima corde*
Humano generi dare se natura fatetur,
Quæ lachrymas dedit: hæc nostri pars optima sensus.

† Luke xix. 41.

‡ Matt. xxiii. 37.

all the Concerns of Man,* and only ceasing it's benevolent Pulsations with Existence, was tremblingly alive to the Interests of his Country. His own Sufferings, exquisite as they were, whatever Commiseration they might excite in others, could not seduce his Attention one Moment from a nobler Object. Amidst the Wailings and Lamentations of the surrounding Multitude, the Mind of Jesus continued unshaken and serene, vacant to the Operations of every finer Feeling of Benevolence, neglectful of itself, and wholly engrossed by the tenderest Solicitude for his Brethren. Worthy indeed of so divine a Character was that pathetic Address of this dying Patriot! *Daughters of Jerusalem! weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For behold! the Days are coming, in which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the Wombs that never bare, and the Breasts that never gave suck! †*

* *Homo sum : humani nihil à me alienum puto.*

† Luke xxiii. 28, 29.

REMARK XVII.

NO Trait more conspicuous in the Character of *Jesus*, or more consonant to our previous Ideas of a Prophet commissioned by the merciful *Parent* of the Universe, than the *benevolent* Tendency of his *Miracles*. It was his *Meat and Drink* to imitate the Example of that God, *whose tender Mercies are over all his Works*.

The Alleviation of human Misery in all it's Forms, unconnected with any the least Appearance of Interest, Vanity, and Ambition, was the invariable End to which all his supernatural Endowments were directed.* The few and futile Objections, which the Ingenuity of Unbelievers has been able to raise in Opposition to this Remark, is of itself a noble Testimony to this Part of our

* *Nusquam legimus miraculum aliquod à Christo patratum circa honores, aut pecunias; sed tantum circa corpus humanum, aut conservandum, aut sustentandum, aut persanandum.* Bacon de Augm. Scient. L. iv. C. 2.

Saviour's Character. The Destruction of the *Herd of Swine* may be justly regarded as a *proper Punishment* of their Owners for keeping such Animals in direct Violation of the *Mosaic* Institutes; and as a suitable Act in the anointed Servant of the *Jehovah* of the *Hebrews*, who came not to destroy the Law and the Prophets, but to fulfil.—

And even Infidelity herself might blush at her noisy Cavils upon the blasting of a BARREN Fig-Tree by the WAY-SIDE; neither an Invasion of private Property, nor any Injury to the Community at large. But the Lesson, which this Action dictated to his Disciples, and now dictates to us, is of the first Importance to every Man alive;—to the *Deist* as well as the *Believer*. If the Opportunities, which God has given us for the Purification of our Affections and the Improvement of our Virtue, be neglected or misemployed;—if we be found *unfruitful* in good Works, we must expect to be *withered*, like the *barren Fig-Tree*, before the fiery Blast of his Displeasure, when he cometh to judge the Earth.

REMARK

R E M A R K XVIII.

JESUS CHRIST is introduced in several Passages of his History recommending *his own Example* as a proper Model for the Imitation of his Disciples. Self-Commendation *may* be the Symptom of a weak and ignoble Mind, and in Truth is not unfrequently found in more immediate Connection with Incapacity and Meanness. But, accompanied by *certain Circumstances* and employed for *certain Ends*, it is the genuine Ebullition of a Soul overflowing with great and generous Sentiments. A celebrated Moralist of Antiquity has considered in a distinct Essay, how a Man, without the Imputation of Impropriety, may *commend himself*. It will be worth while to make an Application of some of his Remarks to the Conduct of our Saviour.

A *Consciousness* of superiour Merit, attended by an actual Manifestation of it, is allowed to be one Privilege for *Self-Commendation*. And surely the Claim, which the Moralist puts in for *Pindar*, on Account of
the

the Excellence of his *Poetry*, the *Christian* may very pardonably advance in Behalf of the multifarious and transcendent *Virtues* of *Jesus Christ*.

Our Moralist grants also, that a political Character, with no Design of Vanity and popular Applause, but with a View of inciting others to an Emulation of his Exploits, may be indulged in proclaiming his own Praises. Could this candid Judge disapprove the modest Exhortation of our Saviour; or rather would he not pronounce it to be the undoubted Effusion of Magnanimity? *Learn of ME; for I am MEEK and LOWLY IN HEART: and ye shall find Rest unto your Souls.** There can be no Suspicion surely of Conceit and Pride, when *Humility* and *Meekness* are the highest Merit, which is claimed: a Species of Merit, which some will not feel any Inclination to dispute; and which a *Greek* or *Roman* Hero, and a modern Duellist, would even think a Degradation to the Dignity of a Man.

Self-Commendation is allowed also, when we are called upon to answer for ourselves, and repel the Attack of an Accuser. Such

* Matt. xi. 29.

Occasions

Occasions were often presented to our Lord by the Malice of his Enemies. With good Reason might he say: *Which of you convinceth me of Sin? Many good Works have I shewed you from my Father: for which of those Works do ye stone me?*—"Such Encomiums of "himself," to adopt the Words of our Author, "not only keep clear of Arrogance and Self-Sufficiency, but betoken an *elevated Spirit* "and an *exalted Virtue*, that will not suffer "itself to be trampled on by the Foot of "Envy." And to this Observation he subjoins a little Piece of History very pertinent to our present Subject, and which, whilst it cannot fail both to entertain and instruct the Reader, may serve to confute that Objection of the *Pharisees*: *Thou bearest Record of thyself: thy Record is not true.**

"When the *Thebans* accused their General "*Pelopidas* for making an Irruption into the "Territories of the *Spartans* and for restoring "the ruined Condition of *Messene*, after the "Expiration of his Office; his abject Submission and Entreaties with Difficulty procured his Acquittal. *Epaminondas*, on the "other Hand, who had been his Colleague

* John viii. 13.

" in this Expedition, pronounced before his
 " Judges a magnificent Panegyric of their
 " mutual Exploits, and professed himself
 " ready to suffer death, if they would declare
 " aloud the Reasons of their Condemnation;
 " which would have been neither more nor
 " less than an Enumeration of the great
 " Services performed for their Country. The
 " whole Audience was struck with Admira-
 " tion of his Magnanimity, and instantly
 " acquitted him."

R E M A R K XIX.

AN extraordinary Penetration, and a perfect Insight into the human Character, were never more decisively demonstrated than by the following Observations, both of the same Tendency.

*Can the Children of the Bride-Chamber mourn as long as the Bridegroom is with them? But the Days will come, when the Bridegroom shall be taken from them; and then shall they fast.**

I have yet many Things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.†

* Matt. ix. 15. † John xvi. 12.

Such

Such sudden Transitions are neither conformable to Experience, nor adapted to the Production of beneficial and permanent Effects. The instantaneous Transformation of *Demea* in the *Comedy* from a *parsimonious Churl* to a *gay and liberal and affable Old-Fellow*, I have ever esteemed a most unnatural Representation of Life and Manners. A much truer Picture is presented to us in the Character of *Hazael* by the *Jewish History*. Whilst the Prophet was enumerating to him the shocking Instances of his future Cruelty, he revolted with Horror from the very Idea of such Enormities; and exclaimed: *But what, is thy Servant a Dog, that he should do this great Thing?** The Access to the Height either of Vice or Virtue must be gradual, and was never accomplished by a single Step.† *The Path of the Just*, says *Solomon*,

* 2 Kings viii. 13.

† Εὐὴ τις λόγος τῶν Ἀπέλων καὶ τοῦ
Δυσσεύου ἐπὶ πείραις. — ἄλ. Simonides.

Nemo repente fuit turpissimus. Juvenal.

See to this Purpose a pleasant Story in *Athenæus*, p. 261, and some excellent Observations in *Spencer d. Legg. Heb.* iii. 2. a Book, which, as a rational useful and learned Publication, has seen no Superior since the Revival of Learning in *Europe*.

is as the shining Light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect Day.

Pursuant to the Wisdom of these Maxims, founded on the immoveable Basis of Experience, our Lord connived at the Prejudices of his Disciples, and treated their Infirmitie with Indulgence. He removed every Obstruction with a gentle and patient Hand; converted even the most minute Occurrences into so many useful Lessons of Morality; and introduced, with assiduous Attention, the Truths of his Religion into their Minds by the most artful Address and most winning Insinuation. He knew the dangerous Warfare, in which they would be engaged; and that Nothing but gradual Discipline, and an easy Transition through successive Hardships, could enable them to withstand the rough Encounter of that *evil Day*, which was approaching. And this Conduct, though abundantly recommended by it's own intrinsic Wisdom, received a full Confirmation of it's Propriety in the Event. These simple *Galileans*, so timid and inexperienced at first, gave full Proof of the Excellence of that Preceptor, under whom they had been trained, in a Fortitude and Perseverance unsubdued by Sufferings and undismayed by Death.

Such

Such consummate Prudence, we see, was contained in that Reply of our blessed Saviour to the Question of *John's* Disciples: *Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy Disciples fast not ?**

R E M A R K XX.

THE Answer, which our Lord returned to the Messengers of *John*, is not only highly observable for the extreme Delicacy of it's Reproof, but betrays a Dignity of Character correspondent to a divine Teacher of Religion. †

John the Baptist, like our Lord's own Disciples and the Rest of the *Jews* without Exception, appears to have entertained a

* Matt. ix. 14.

† I follow in this Remark my own Interpretation of *John's* Message to *Jesus*, proposed some years ago in my *Commentary* on St. *Matthew*, which I believe in many Respects to be entirely new, and which certainly sets this whole Transaction in a very beautiful and consistent Light. A late Author, however, has published a *Volume* upon this Subject, and delivers the same Interpretation as *his own*. I think myself much indebted to the Candour of the *Analytical Reviewers* for doing me Justice on this Occasion. Matt. xi. 2—7.

very

very erroneous Notion of the *Messiah's* Kingdom; supposing, that he would erect a *temporal Monarchy* in *Judea*, deliver that Country from the *Roman Yoke*, and extend his victorious Empire to the Extremities of the Earth. He had been confined in Prison for some Time by the Command of *Herod*, where the Reputation of our Saviour's mighty Works had reached him, and excited no little Astonishment, that such a Personage, exhibiting such undeniable Testimonials of a heavenly Commission, should suffer his Forerunner to languish and die in Captivity. Full of these Ideas, he sends two of his Disciples to *Jesus*, signifying his entire Persuasion, that he was the *Christ* promised by the Prophecies to their Fathers; and that all their Expectations on this Head were accomplished in his Person. *Thou art he who was to come: Can we expect another?*

Our Lord immediately perceived the whole Tendency of this Message, and gave a Reply, than which I think Nothing more beautiful and striking can be well conceived.

He healed in their Presence a Variety of diseased People, who had been brought

brought to him for that Purpose; and to many that were blind he gave Sight.* A sufficient Proof this of the benevolent and salutary Nature of his Commission:—that he was not come like a military Conqueror, to destroy Men's Lives, but to save them! Go, says he, and shew John again those Things, which ye hear and see. The Blind receive their Sight, and the Lame walk; the Lepers are cleansed, and the Deaf hear; the Dead are raised up, and the Poor have the Gospel preached to them. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.

The latter Parts of this Reply are worthy of particular Attention: *The Poor have the Gospel preached to them.* “The lower Orders of Mankind, who are treated with so much Contempt—the profane Vulgar—the cursed People†—are the immediate Objects of my Regard and Favour. I am not come to trample on the human Race; but to relieve and comfort, and exalt these Children of a common Father—these Sons of Poverty and Distress, whom I am not ashamed to call my Brethren.†”

* Luke vii. 21. † See John vii. 49.

† Heb. ii. 12.

And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me. "Happy is the Man, who shall be convinced of his erroneous Preconceptions of the *Messiah*, and not be scandalized at the Lowliness of my Office."

This Idea of the whole Transaction furnishes too a most obvious and satisfactory Interpretation of that extraordinary Assertion of our Lord to his Disciples, after *John's* Messengers had left him.

Verily I say unto you, among them that are born of Women, there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he, that is least in the Kingdom of Heaven, is greater than he.

As if he had said: "Great as my Fore-runner may be, and however eminent his Character, the least Disciple of my heavenly Kingdom, which he fancies would resemble the Kingdoms of this World—the meanest among you all, who entertains just Sentiments of my Designation and the Gospel, which I preach, is greater than he."

We do not form our Conclusion upon the Strength of one or two Deductions: but so many repeated Proofs of *superiour Wisdom* and *Dignity of Mind*, in one Character, compose

pose an irresistible Force of Argument, and extort from us the Declaration of the *Roman Soldier*: TRULY THIS MAN WAS A SON OF GOD.

R E M A R K XXI.

THERE is one Circumstance more in the Conduct of our Saviour, to me more beautiful and affecting than I am able to express; upon which indeed, such is *my* Opinion of it's inimitable Excellence! I would even venture to rest the whole Weight of the *Christian Fabric*, if I might appeal for Judgment, not to the *philosophical* Theorist, the dull Pedant, or the conceited Scoffer; but to the ingenuous Inquirer after Truth,—to the Heart that answers at the Call of Nature—to Purity of Taste, and Delicacy of Feeling.

When our Lord, at his last solemn Conference with the Apostles previous to his Apprehension and Crucifixion, expressly declared, that they would all forsake him that very Night, and be scattered abroad like *Sheep*, which had lost their *Shepherd*; *Peter* was offended with such an Impeachment of

his Fidelity and Resolution. *Though they ALL forsake thee*, he replies with Eagerness, *yet will I never forsake thee.*

We know the *Event* of these boastful Pretensions. It corresponded exactly to the *Prediction*. This *faithful Adherent*, this *intrepid Champion* of his Master, not only forsook him in the Hour of Danger, but disavowed *three* several Times, with the most solemn Protestations, all Connection with *Jesus of Nazareth*: I KNOW NOT THE MAN.

After our Saviour's Resurrection from the Grave, he appeared to his Disciples at the Sea of *Tiberias*,* as they were fishing. They appear to have been sensible, that it was their Master; but their Astonishment at so extraordinary an Interview seems to have got the better of their Inquisitiveness; and none of them ventured to say, *Who art thou?* — For it must be remembered, that, notwithstanding his repeated and positive Predictions to this Purpose, the Disciples had yet in their own Minds no decided Conviction of his Resurrection from the Grave. He dined with them upon some Fish, which

* John xxi.

they had just taken ; and after Dinner, as they were all placed around him, absorbed in Admiration and respectful Silence, this benevolent and forgiving Master turns to *Peter*, and with Accents of ineffable Complacency and an unexampled Delicacy of Reproof,—*Simon ! Son of Jonas*, says he, *lovest thou me more than THESE ?* pointing to the Rest of the Disciples. “*Thou* didst indeed profess a Determination to continue with me, whatever might become of *them*. What dost thou say now ? *Are* then thy Fidelity and *thy* Love superiour to *their's* ?”

Can the Imagination of Man conceive any thing more delightful and affecting than this ? What nobler Demonstration could be given of a sweet, compassionate, and forgiving Temper ? Could the Saviour of Mankind be represented, by any Contrivance of Ingenuity in a more amiable Point of View ? It were impossible.—

We may figure to ourselves the Confusion of the whole Company on this Occasion, and the peculiar Perturbation and Shame of *Peter*. He summoned, however, Presence of Mind sufficient for a Reply : *Yea, Lord ! thou knowest that I love thee.*

Now, at this Period of the Transaction, let any one determine for himself, upon the Maxims of Experience and the ordinary Operation of human Feelings, whether, if he were placed in the same Circumstances with our Lord, *his* Answer to *Peter's* Declaration of Love would not have been attended with some *selfish* Symptoms, some Expression of *Resentment*, some Severity of *Reproof*. But the Heart of *Jesus* was refined from the Dross of all sordid and ignoble Passions. *He saith unto him: Feed my "Lambs. I require no Sacrifice to appease " my Vanity, no public Acknowledgement of " thy Fault, no abject Submission, at thy " Hands. I shall be satisfied with thy " future Services in Return for thy former " Infidelity. Shew thy Love in being a " faithful Pastor of my Flock. If thou " couldst forsake their Shepherd, forsake not " them."*

It seems probable, that neither *Peter* himself nor the other Apostles apprehended the full Force of their Master's Expostulation. He therefore *thrice* repeats the Question, *Simon! Son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than*

than these? alluding, with exquisite Address, to *Peter's threefold Denial* of him. This produced the Effect, which it were natural to expect. *Peter* at least appears to have felt the full Force of this delicate Appeal. He *was* grieved at the *third* Repetition of the Question; and was desirous of putting an End to this embarrassing Conversation. Lord! he replies, *thou knowest all Things; —thou knowest that I love thee.*

To sum up the whole Matter in few Words. In the preceding *Remarks* I have touched on *some* striking Circumstances of our *Saviour's* Character, which appeared to me peculiarly worthy of Admiration: but the short Volumes of his History will furnish many more Proofs of Wisdom and Virtue, which the whole Annals of our Species would endeavour to parallel in vain. Every Individual must be left to his own Determination in this Case, and will feel Impressions peculiar to himself; Impressions unavoidably regulated by a thousand varying Circumstances of natural Constitution, Education and Modes of Life: but let him be careful to report the true Verdict of his Conscience.

For my Part, I declare in the most serious, and hearty, and unreserved Manner, that I perceive in the Gospel more unequivocal Marks of Authenticity, than in any History whatsoever, whether of ancient or modern Times:—that the very Idea of their being a Forgery of some Impostor constitutes a Problem of far more difficult Solution than the Proposition, which it is intended to overthrow:—that the *Evangelists* have consequently given us a faithful Relation of the Life and Actions of *Jesus Christ*:—and finally, that NEVER MAN SPAKE LIKE THAT MAN.

R E M A R K XXII.

THERE are some extraordinary Circumstances in the Character of *St. Peter*, so entirely conformable to human Nature, as enhance the Supposition of Imposture to a very considerable Height of Improbability, and are an able Advocate for the Genuineness of the Gospels.

This Apostle put in Practice on every Occasion the Advice, which *Peleus* gave to his

his Son *Achilles*, when he dismissed him to the *Trojan War*.*

*A brave Pre-eminence above thy Peers
Be thy Ambition.*

When *Jesus* was walking on the Sea, *Peter* alone had the Resolution to quit the Vessel, and trust himself to the Surface of the Waters.† He had the Honour of giving the only true Answer to that Question of our Lord, *Whom say ye that I am? Thou art the Christ*, says our Apostle, *the Son of the living God*.‡—He undertook to reprove his Master, when the Rest were silent, for talking of his Sufferings and Death.¶—He alone ventured to deliver his Opinion upon that Occasion of the *Transfiguration* on the Mount.§—The *Jews* themselves appear to have considered him as the most active and forward of the Disciples. The Collectors of the Money for the Temple apply to *him* for our Lord's Contribution, and *he* reports their Inquiry to his Master.¶—His inqui-

* Il. A. 782.

ΑΙΕΝ ΑΡΙΣΤΕΥΕΙΝ, ΚΑΙ ΥΠΕΙΡΟΧΟΝ ΕΜΜΕΝΑΙ ΑΛΛΩΝ.

† Matt. xiv. 28.

‡ Matt. xvi. 15, 16.

¶ Verf. 22.

§ Matt. xvii. 4.

¶ Matt. xvii. 24, 25.

sitive

sive Temper distinguishes itself on other Occasions of less Moment.*—And, when *Jesus* was apprehended, *he* gave good Proof of a seeming Resolution to defend his Master, and to fulfil his Promise of adhering to him, though all his other Disciples should prove faithless: for *John* informs us, that *Simon Peter* drew his Sword, and smote a Servant of the High-Priest, and cut off his right Ear.†

Yes; most Men will be apt to say, “such a Character as this, who made such liberal Professions of Love and Service, and more—over seemed to entertain truer Notions of his Master’s Person and Office than the other Disciples, might naturally have deserved more Dependence to be placed upon him in a Time of Danger, than those, who by their Silence had declared themselves to be possessed of less Forwardness and Resolution: especially too after the public and unreserved Avowal of his Determination to be, like another *Abdiel*,

----- “faithful found
Among the faithless, faithful only be.”

* Matt. xv. 15. Luke xii. 41. Matt. xviii. 21. xix. 27. John xiii. 6. See also Luke v. 5. viii. 45.

† xviii. 10.

In this Manner I say *most* Men would probably be disposed to reason on this Case: and if a *Galilean* Fisherman, unpractised in the Study of human Manners, had devised this History, I do not doubt but *Peter's* Conduct would have been kept *uniform*; correspondent to the former Delineation of his Character and the Boldness of his Pretensions. But the Picture, now presented to us, exhibits a genuine Representation of real Life, and is indeed so perfect in it's Resemblance, that the Designer of it *must* have had an Original before him. If not, let our Adversaries give some reasonable Account of that ingenious Imitator, who surveyed only the Transcript of Life and Manners in his own Bosom.

We are told by a Surgeon of Eminence in his Profession, that it was judged necessary to amputate the Arm of two Boys in the Hospital, of the same Age and similar Constitutions. One consented at once to the Operation without betraying any Symptoms of Timidity, when the Opinion of the Surgeon was declared to him on the preceding Night. The other was with much Difficulty brought to acquiesce, and shewed

Signs

Signs of the utmost Horror and Dejection at the approaching Catastrophe. What was the Event? The Boy of so much Readiness and Spirit, sunk into Timidity; and endured the Operation with no Degree of Firmness: the other supported his severe Trial with a true manly Resolution—The Relator observes, that he had been Witness to a similar Issue in numerous Instances of this Nature.

This Account gives me an Opportunity of pointing out a similar Mark of Authenticity, from a Conformity to real Life, in the History of our Saviour.

His Agony of Spirit on the nearer Approach of his Crucifixion could not be exceeded. The eloquent Physician has exhausted the Powers of Language in his Description of it. But the Heroism, with which the Saviour of the World, notwithstanding this previous Dejection of Soul, supported the exquisite Tortures of the Cross, reflects Honour upon Humanity, and furnishes the noblest Example of Fortitude and Magnanimity, that has been exhibited since the Foundation of the World. The Conduct of *Socrates* at the Conclusion of his Life reflects

reflects the highest Honour on that admirable Man: but not to insist on other Circumstances of Superiority on the Part of *Jesus*, a Draught of Hemlock, and the Anguish of Suspension by the Hands and Feet, perforated with Nails, will admit of Comparison. The *Athenian* was indeed in every Respect truly great; but we do no Injury to Truth and him, when we assert, that our *Nazarene* was greater than he.

R E M A R K XXIII.

THE Manner, in which the Apostles, with all Simplicity and Freedom, mention their own Failings, and in which *Matthew* and *John* make no Exception of themselves from the Number of those, whom their Master reproves for their Faithlessness and Stupidity, must be allowed by every candid Person to carry with it a pleasing Air of Impartiality and Veracity.* Indeed this Acknowledgement of Infirmary and Error is characteristic of noble Minds: and could

* *Pisides* apud *Suid.*

Οὐκ ἐστὶ ταῦτα πρὸς χάριν κεχωρισμένα,

Ἀπλοὶ δὲ πάντες τῆς ἀληθείας λόγοι.

hardly

hardly be expected from Men of mean Acquirements and low Birth without some powerful extraneous Principle; such a Principle for Instance, as *Christianity*, which is level to every Capacity, and calculated to exert it's ennobling Influence alike on the highest and lowest Orders of Society.

I have always been greatly delighted with a Passage in *Celsus*, which falls in very exactly with the Train of these Ideas. "*Hippocrates*," says he,* "has informed us, that he once mistook the Sutures of the Skull for a Fracture: after the Manner of a great Genius, conscious of his extraordinary Accomplishments. For the Qualifications of little Minds are but a small Amount, and will admit of no Deduction. Indeed the simple Confession of actual Mistakes is peculiarly becoming such accomplished Characters, who may easily spare a little from their copious Stores: and especially a Confession upon those Points, which may prove beneficial to Posterity."

* Cels. Lib. viii. C. 4. And equal Commendation is due to our Countryman *Sydenham* for a similar Confession in his *Treatise De Hydrepe*.

REMARK XXIV.

THE Manner, in which the *Gospel-Historians* have related the Death of *Judas*, appears to me so singular, that I am persuaded no two Writers could have given such apparently differing Accounts of the same Transaction, who had not the *Reality* under Contemplation at the Time, and, seeing no Difficulty or Obscurity themselves, could have no Suspicion of creating them to others by any Peculiarity of Language. My Argument upon this Topic carries with it, I must confess, irresistible Conviction to my Mind; and I shall rejoice, if I so conduct it as to communicate an equal Impression to the Reader.

Now my Conclusion in Favour of the Authenticity of the Gospels from the Accounts of the Death of *Judas* is founded upon these two Suppositions:

1. That, whether the later Historian of the two, *Matthew* and *Luke*, had seen or not the History of his Predecessor, the Circumstances of the false Apostle's Death were perfectly known

known to them both : though the Probability certainly is, that *Luke* from his Connection with *Paul* and the leading Men in the Church, and indeed from the close Union of all it's Members at that early Period, must have been acquainted with the Gospel of St. *Matthew* ; whom I should judge for many Reasons to be the *earlier* writer.*

2. That the immediate Cause of the Death of *Judas* was a *Dysentery*, brought on by excessive Sorrow, and Perturbation of Spirits.

As to the *first* Position, it is not possible to imagine, that the last Circumstances of the Life of *Judas*, who had acted such an extraordinary Part, could have been unknown to any of the first Disciples : Circumstances too, so extraordinary in themselves, must have been the subject of frequent Conversation and Inquiry in the Church. Indeed St. *Peter* or rather St. *Luke*, has expressly told us, that the Death of *Judas* was a Matter of

* I am an advocate for an early Date of *Matthew's* Gospel, which is countenanced by many and high Probabilities : and am of Opinion, that the other Hypothesis has not a single Probability to support it.

public Notoriety to *all the Dwellers at Jerusalem.* *

My *second* Position I find myself able to establish upon very solid Ground; and I thereby bring the sacred Writers to a perfect *Consistency* of Narrative. This is a very important Point: for no Ingenuity of Man can bring the two Accounts of this Transaction to a Reconciliation upon any other Supposition; and I cannot but think, that a strong Suspicion would lie against their *Credibility in general*, if they could be proved to have given *contradictory* Accounts of so remarkable and notorious a Fact.

Matthew tells us, that *Judas cast down the Money in the Temple, and went and HANGED HIMSELF*, says our Translation: but I say; *And went and DIED WITH ANGUISH*: ἀπεθών ἀπὸ πένεσσο, says the Original. † This Word is only once used by the Greek Translators in the *canonical* Books of the *Old-Testament*, and then in the Account of *Abithophel's* Death; ‡ who is supposed to have put a period to his Existence in the same Way with *Judas*. The *Hebrew* Word employed

* Acts i. 19.

† Matt. xxvii. 5.

‡ 2 Sam. xvii. 23.

upon that Occasion is קָנַח, which is also adopted by all the other *oriental* Versions, to which I have Access, both here and in *St. Matthew*, except by the *Coptic* and *Perfic*; who seem, however, to have followed the usual Acceptation of the Passage. Some of the *Rabbins* interpret that Word of *choaking with Sorrow*, and attribute the Death of *Ahitophel* to the gradual Effects of *Disappointment* and *Vexation*. And this Interpretation is rendered extremely probable by considering that מָלַח is the Word used in a great Variety of Passages for *hanging*, and that קָנַח is never once clearly employed in this Sense. I make no Account of a Passage in *Job*, where the Reading, I think, is not genuine, and if it be, our present Translation is improper.

It is observable, that in the Account of *Saul's Distemper*,* which was certainly a *Melancholy*,† the *Septuagint* says, that *an evil Spirit from the Lord CHOAKED HIM*: employ-

* 1 Sam. xvi. 14.

† See some Observations upon this Point in my *Silva Critica*, a Miscellany of *philological* and *critical* Remarks on the *Scriptures* and *profane Writers* now printing by the Favour of the University at the *Cambridge Press*.

ing

ing a Word exactly equivalent to that in *St. Matthew*. And *Josephus* says, that *certain Affections and Demons invaded Saul, bringing upon him SUFFOCATIONS and STRANGINGS.** And my Sense of the Word חנק is corroborated by the *Targums* of *Jonathan* and *Jerusalem* on *Gen. xxii. 20.* which say, that when *Sarah* was told of *Abraham's* Intention to sacrifice *Isaac*, she was SUFFOCATED, AND DIED WITH ANXIETY.†

It is evident from these Authorities, that *St. Matthew's* Expression will not only bear the Translation, which I propose, but, considering that he was a *Jew*, rather requires it.

As to *St. Luke's* Relation of this Matter, it is a just and classical Description of a Man exhausted and perishing by the Violence of a *Dysentery*. This is a proper Translation of it.

He fell flat upon his Face, and made a Noise by bursting in the Middle; and all his Bowels were poured out.‡

* Τον Σαυλον δε περιηρχετο παθη τινα και δαιμονια, πνιγμους αυτω και στραγγαλας επιφεροντα Ant. vi. 8. 2.

† חנקת ומיתתו מן חנקת. See *Diod. Sic. iv. 34. Athen. Deip. vi. 2. ix. 12.* Many other Authors might be referred to, if necessary.

‡ Acts i. 18.

The *πρηνὴς γενομένου* of our Evangelist may be well illustrated by this Passage of *Euripides*, *Alcest.* 141.

Ἦδη προνωπὴς ἐστὶ καὶ ψυχόρραγος.

Not unlike this is — *ῥηξεί αὐτὴς πρηνεὶς*. *Sap. Sol. iv.* 19.

The Phrase — *ελαπυσσε μέσῳ* — is admirably vindicated by a Gloss of *Hesychius*, which I long ago corrected from this Expression of *St. Luke*: *Μεσοφερδεῖν, ΜΕΣΟΛΑΚΕΙΝ*. — To the same Purpose this of *Plautus Curc.* ii. 1, 7.

Nilil metuo, nisi ne medius disrumpar miser: and that of *Virgil*:

----- RUMPANTUR ut ILIA *Codro*,

and many others of the same Kind, derived from the *Greeks*. So *Aristophanes*, *Ran.* 955. *Ὀφέλες μέσῳ διαρραγῆναι*.

And that the Words — *ἐξεχύθη πάντα τὰ σπλάγχνα αὐτῆς* — suitably describe the Effects of a *Dysentery*, the learned Reader may be convinced by consulting the *Scholiast* on *Aristoph.* *Vesp.* 604.

It seems pretty clear, that *Jehoram* died of this Distemper. In 2 *Chron.* xxi. 18, 19. the following Account is given of it.

Jehovah

Jehovah smote him in his Bowels with an incurable Disease ; and his BOWELS CAME OUT, and he died of grievous Evacuations.

Τῶν ἐντέρων ἐκρυνέντων, says *Josephus* in his Relation of this Malady. Ant. ix. 5. 2.

Dr. *Mead's* Testimony is very explicit and satisfactory.

Non alius, ut mihi videtur, fuit hic morbus, quàm gravis dysenteria. In hac enim intestina exulcerantur ;—nonnunquàm etiàm carnosæ quædam ramenta simul descendunt, ità ut ipsa intestina ejici videantur. The last Particular I have known myself to take Place in this Disorder.

The Account given by *Josephus* of the Death of *Aristobulus*, is very much to our Purpose.

*Remorse for his Crime brings a Distemper upon Aristobulus, and, his Mind continually dwelling upon the Murder, he wasted away, and discharged much Blood, as HIS BOWELS WERE TORN BY EXCESSIVE SORROW.**

Another Passage of the same Author is too pertinent and striking to be omitted :

* Τῶν σπλαγχνῶν ὑπ' ἀκραίᾳ τῆς λύπης σπαρασσόμενων ἀθρὺν αἷμα ἀναβάλλει. Bell. Jud. 1. 3. 6. Compare Ant. XIII. 2. 3.

intended, no doubt, for a Description of the *same Disorder* ; which the preceding Circumstances of the Person's History might lead us to attribute also to the *same Cause* of Sorrow and Vexation.

*Zenodorus, HIS BOWELS BURSTING and a large Effusion of Blood taking Place, dies at Antioch in Syria.**

My *two* Propositions have now been established, I presume, to a very high Degree of Probability. My Inference from these Premises is obvious and simple. — I do maintain, that no *two* Persons in their Senses, who had set themselves to fabricate a *fictitious* History, could possibly have given *two such* Accounts of the *same* Transaction. Ever on their Guard to avoid a Suspicion of Collusion and Imposture, they would have brought their Relations to a greater Appearance of Agreement and Consistency ; nor have trusted to the Ingenuity and Uncertainty of Criticism for future Vindication. There could not have been given, in my Judgement, more decisive Evidence of an artless unsuspecting Integrity, relating a *real Transaction* within the Compass of their *own Knowledge*.

* Παγενίῳ αἰῶνι τε σπλάγχνα, καὶ πολλὰ ὑποχωρεῖν αἱματὶ. Ant. xv. 10. 3.

Such

Such a Degree of *Obscurity* and so much *Appearance* of Inconsistency is highly pleasing. Every Man's Experience will inform him, how apt we are to omit in a Relation little Circumstances, very essential to give *another* a clear Insight into the Fact, which *our* perfect Knowledge of it leads *us* to disregard: not reflecting, that an entire Stranger to it cannot possibly possess the same Train of Ideas, that ocular Observation has impressed on our own Minds. No Error more natural; none more common both in Books and in common Life. But I will leave the Reader to his own Reflections.

R E M A R K XXV.

FROM the peculiar Complexion and Phraseology of St. *John's* Gospel a critical Observer may deduce no inconsiderable Argument in Behalf of the *Christian* Revelation.

It is well known, that *John* was the Disciple, on whom our Lord reposed a greater Confidence, and whom he regarded with Sentiments of peculiar Friendship and Affection. When *Jesus* had declared, that one of the Apostles then at Table with

him would be his Betrayer, we are told, that *Simon Peter beckoned to John, who was leaning on Jesus' Bosom*, to ask him of whom he spake : * a Question, which intimates no less than *John's* Situation at the Table, a more intimate Familiarity. Our Lord's Recommendation of *Mary* to his Protection, and the Manner of that Recommendation, is a further Proof, independent of the Apostle's own express Testimony to the same Effect, of mutual Esteem and Love. And this reciprocal Attachment argues a *congenial Temper* and a *similar Form of Mind*.

Add to this, that *John* was called to be an Apostle in an early Period of our Lord's Ministry : a longer Time, therefore, of Attendance on the public Life of *Jesus*, as well as more frequent Opportunities in private, would unavoidably operate in producing a more exact Resemblance of Character between them.

Now what is the natural, and indeed necessary, Conclusion from these Considerations ? Truly, that the Gospel of this beloved Disciple must contain, in all Probability, a more *true* and *lively Representation*

* See John xiii. 23, 24. xxi. 22.

of the Life and Conversation of his Master. If so, and *Jesus Christ* be that Word and Wisdom of God, which the Evangelists declare him to have been, St. *John's* Gospel will contain more and clearer Marks of Authenticity,—will wear a Complexion eminently characteristic of it's original,—and will betray an intrinsic Usefulness and Excellence, above the Rest.

And such, I am perfectly persuaded, is the *Fact*. This Position, however, admits of no Reference but to the private Judgement of the unprejudiced and competent Examiner. Yet I must be permitted to declare my Opinion, that St. *John's* Gospel is the least understood of all the *four*: and that a more close and critical Perusal of it will gradually disclose it's Excellencies with increasing Lustre, and give perpetual Corroboration and Clearness to the Argument advanced in this *Remark*. “*TIME*,” says an illustrious Ancient, “overthrows the Fictions of Opinion, and establishes the Decisions of Truth and Nature.”

R E M A R K XXVI.

THE many little Incidents interspersed through the Gospels, so consonant to real Action and the acknowledged Operations of the Mind, such an artless Mention of Circumstances seemingly trivial, but found of the highest Moment;—not only remove every Suspicion of Forgery from illiterate *Tax-Gatherers* and *Fishermen*, but seem the legitimate Extraction of Integrity and Truth. I will select a few Particulars out of many to illustrate and confirm this Observation.

1. What can be more *natural* in every Respect than the following Relation, or a more faithful Description of that mean Jealousy and Eagerness to depreciate superiour Merit, so observable in the World.

*And, when he was come into his own Country, he taught them in their Synagogue, inso-much that they were astonished, and said: Whence hath this Man this Wisdom and these mighty Works? Is not this the Carpenter's Son?**

* Matt. xiii. 54—58.

I cannot

I cannot forbear quoting on this Occasion an Epitaph on the Poet *Æschylus*, as the Tenour of it falls in so pertinently with the Subject of this Remark. *

*This Tomb proclaims renowned Æschylus,
Far from his native Soil, reposing here;
Hard by Sicilian Gela's limpid Stream.
Why wilt thou thus, invidious Athens! why
Still persecute thy best and noblest Sons?*

2. No Study and Ingenuity could have given us such a lively Representation of the *Suspicion* and *Uneasiness* of *conscious Guilt* in the most elaborate Picture, as this single Stroke of a plain unaffected Copier from Nature;

At that Time Herod the Tetrarch heard of the Fame of Jesus, and said unto his Servants: THIS IS JOHN THE BAPTIST; HE IS RISEN FROM THE DEAD. †

The deliberate and unprovoked Murder of a righteous Man, whom he loved and respected, ‡ to gratify a malicious Woman

* Αισχυλον ἥδε λεγει ταφῇ λιθῶ ἐνθαδε κεισθαι,
Τον μεγαλ, οικειης τηλ' απο Κερροπτης,
Λευκα Γελας Σικελιοιο παρ' ὑδαλα. τις φθονῶ ασίων
Θησειδας αγαθων εγμολῶ αιεν εχει;

† Matt. xiv. 1—3.

‡ Mark vi. 20.

and

and his drunken Nobles, filled his Mind with perpetual Alarm. Wherever he went, the Phantom still pursued him with unrelenting Affiduity: no Incident so immaterial, no Event so extraordinary, with which his Imagination did not associate the frightful Object. The established Laws of Nature, he thought, might *easily* be superseded for one End at least, the Disturbance of his Repose:—IT IS JOHN THE BAPTIST:—HE IS RISEN FROM THE DEAD.

The copious Description of the sublime Satirist, noble as it is, does not furnish a more lively Idea of the Horrors of Guilt, than this Ejaculation of the *Jewish King*.*

3. Numerous Particulars, devoid of all Art and Ostentation, seem to indicate *personal Appearance* and *ocular Testimony*. This gives also great Confirmation to *Mark's Gospel*, and to the Testimony of the Ancients, that he was assisted by St. *Peter*.

Matthew says in general, that the Disciples had forgot to take Bread with them:† *Mark* tells us, that they had a single Loaf.‡

* Juv. XIII. 210—236.

† Matt. xvi. 5.

‡ Mark viii. 14.

4. When our Evangelist informs us, that the Woman *shook together* the Alabaster Box of Ointment before she poured it on the Head of *Jesus*,* he not only uses the Expression of an *Eye-Witness*, but of one, who was acquainted with these *mixed Perfumes*, and must therefore have written, when such *Boxes* and such *Ointments* were in Use.†

5. It was *Night* at the Time of our Lord's Examination before the High-Priest; and therefore an Objection might arise with some to the Account given of *Peter's* Conduct, who *followed at a Distance*,‡ and could not easily be distinguished in the *Dark*. But we are informed, that there was a *Fire* in the Hall of the High-Priest, and that *Peter sat and warmed himself* there. Hence it is, that|| the *Maid-Servant* is said to LOOK UPON HIM, before she speaks: plainly intimating, that she was *examining* by the

* Ch. xiv. 3.

† I forbear to transcribe, what I have before endeavoured* to confirm by various Passages from ancient Authors; and therefore shall refer for the Sake of Brevity to some Observations on this Text in the *Theological Repository*, and my *Silva Critica*, mentioned above.

‡ Mark xiv. 54.

|| Ver. 67.

Light

Light of the Fire, whether it really was *Peter*, or not.

Many other strong Presumptions of *ocular Testimony* might be produced from the *other Evangelists*.

6. This artless Relation of *St. John* amounts of itself to an ample Confutation of that idle Calumny, that the *Disciples came by Night and stole the Body of our Lord*.*

Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the Sepulchre, and seeth the Linen Cloaths lie, and the Napkin, that was about his Head, not lying with the Linen Cloaths, but wrapped together in a Place by itself.†

Are these Appearances of *Composure* and *Regularity* at all suitable with the HURRY and TREPIDATION of THIEVES, when an armed Guard too is at Hand, stealing by NIGHT? — The Historian does not dwell upon the Circumstance, as if it were mentioned with a *direct* View of answering some Objection; as a Forger would have done: he delivers it with all the Simplicity of an unsuspecting Relator of the Truth, and it, therefore, carries with it far more Weight of Evidence than a Multiplicity of Reasons and

* Matt. xxviii. 13.

† John xxii. 6, 7.

the most laboured Explanation. *Pindar* has well observed, that *three Words will be sufficient in a good Cause.**

REMARK XXVII.

THE Gospels hold out a Representation of the *Manners* of the *common People*, which has it's Accuracy ascertained by uniform Experience and the general Voice of the Histories of Mankind.

Whether the Attachment of the Multitude to our Saviour were weakened by the Disappointment of that universal Expectation among the *Jews*, that their *Messiah* would erect a *temporal Kingdom*, or any other undiscoverable Cause wrought the Change on the Humours of the Mob; (for our own Times have given many Proofs of these quick Transitions, and how great a Fire one Spark of popular Rage can kindle) whatever, I say, the Cause might be, they soon manifested so much Conformity to the

* Ευωνυμον ες δικαν

Τρια επτα διαρρησει. Nem. vii.

Wishes and Sentiments of their Rulers as to demand the Execution of *him*, whom they had so lately followed *with Hosannas*, and saluted as *the King of Israel*.

The Account, which the *Roman* Poet has given us of the Behaviour of the Populace to *Sejanus*, the great Friend and Favourite of the Emperor *Tiberius*, might serve as a Comment to this Part of the Gospel-History. All they knew was the Emperor's Displeasure and the Favourite's Degradation. But *this* was a sufficient Ground for their immediate Alienation and every Species of Insult. "If," says my Author, "the Minister, on the other Hand, had contrived to take off his Master, this very *Sejanus* would have been, at the Moment of his Execution, with equal Cordiality and as much Reason, saluted Emperor in his Stead by the same Populace." *

But, if the mistaken Notion of the *Jews* respecting the Nature of the *Messiah's* Kingdom really operated at all in producing this sudden Change in the Behaviour of the Populace, it certainly had not produced

* Juv. Sat. x. 61.

such a *general* Effect as might have been presumed from the Disappointment of an Expectation so agreeable, so universal, and so deeply rooted: which makes the Fickleness and Depravity of the Vulgar still more flagrant, or, in other Words, more exactly correspondent to History and Experience. The Seizure of *Jesus* by Night strongly countenances this Opinion, and cannot otherwise be explained. When the Multitude solicit the Release of *Barabbas* and the Execution of *Jesus*, they do not appear to express their free unbiaſſed Opinion, but to have listened to the Instigations of the *Chief Priests* and *Elders*. *

However this be, one Circumstance attending the Apprehension of *Jesus* appears to me very material, and from which I would draw a most important Inference; and in this I am greatly countenanced by the Spirit of the Narrative, and the total Absence, to all Appearance, of such remote intention in the Relation of it. Let the Reader decide upon the Reasonableness of my Conclusion.

Jesus said unto them: Whom seek ye? They answered him: Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus

* Matt. xxvii. 20.

*said unto them: I am he. And Judas also, who betrayed him, stood with them. As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, THEY WENT BACKWARD, AND FELL TO THE GROUND.**

Now, whether we suppose the *Jewish* Officers to have acted in this Manner of their own Accord, or to have used this Caution at the Instance of *Judas*, their Conduct is an undeniable Proof of their *Fear*; which, as far as I can discover, could arise from no other Cause than a Conviction of our Lord's MIRACULOUS POWER. Let any Man assign a better Reason, if he can. For my Part, I shall continue to consider this Transaction, till I can see a more probable Solution of it upon other Principles, as a most pleasing incidental Attestation to the MIRACLES of JESUS.

I must observe still further upon the Subject of this *Remark*, that the Behaviour of the Populace of *Jerusalem*, in whatever Light it may be considered, and upon whatever Principles it may be explained, exhibits another characteristic Feature in the Manners of Mankind at large: I mean that abomi-

* John xviii. 4—7.

nable *Selfishness*, and Insensibility to the Concerns of others, which is the foulest Stain upon the human Character, and of all Vices the most incompatible with the Essence of *Christianity*. Let me be permitted to relate a little Piece of History to this Purpose. *

“ Whilst *Demosthenes* was pleading the Cause
 “ of a Person, accused of a capital Offence,
 “ he observed the Audience in a State of
 “ Confusion, and totally inattentive to the
 “ Business, which was before them. Upon
 “ this, he earnestly entreated their Attention
 “ for a few Minutes, and began to relate,”
 how a certain young Man hired an Ass to
 carry his Clothes and Provisions to *Megara*,
 accompanied by a Driver, who was to take
 Care of the Animal and bring him back.
 The Day proved extremely hot; and, as
 there was no Tree, nor any Kind of Shelter
 near to protect him from the Vehemence of
 the Sun’s Rays, he prepared to lay himself
 down under the Shadow of the Ass. This
 the Servant of the Owner would not allow,
 maintaining, that he had hired the Ass only,
 and not his Shadow. Hereupon a most violent
 Altercation arose between them. “ When

* See *Suidas* in *Ovæ omia*.

“ our Orator had proceeded thus far in his
 “ Story, he perceived the Assembly to be
 “ grown attentive ; highly delighted with
 “ the Tale, and impatient to hear the Con-
 “ clusion of it. Instead of proceeding in his
 “ Relation, the Orator reproved them with
 “ great Severity for their childish Curiosity
 “ and Eagerness about the *Shadow of an Afs*,
 “ and their scandalous unconcern for the *Life*
 “ of an *innocent Person*, whom he was de-
 “ fending.”

Upon the Whole, we may challenge any Man to produce an Instance of a fictitious Narrative, which contains such a Multitude of Incidents, of more or less Magnitude, so conformable throughout to the Manners of Mankind, as are supplied by the short historical Writings of the *New Testament*.

R E M A R K XXVIII.

WE have a good Symptom of Authenticity in any Person pretending to a *prophetic Character*, if he lays down the Circumstances, under which his *Prophecies* will receive their Completion, with *Particularity* and *Precision*.

The

The Exactness of the Gospels in this Respect is very striking and satisfactory.

Our Lord foretels his own Death with an Enumeration of *many Circumstances*—that he should be *betrayed* by *one* of his twelve *Apostles*—that the *Jews* would deliver him up to the *Romans*—that *particular Insults* and *Ill-Usage* would attend his Apprehension—that he should be *crucified*—that he should *rise again* from the Grave—and that on the *third Day* after his Interment.—He foretels, that *James*, and *John*, and *Peter*, would suffer *Martyrdom* for their Adherence to his Religion :—that *John* would live to the Destruction of *Jerusalem* ;—this *Destruction* itself, and *before* the Generation then existing were removed from the Earth,—and by the *Romans*, with an Enumeration of many other *Peculiarities*.

It is this Precision, which in *Jerome's* Opinion,* who indeed only follows *Jose-*

* *Illud in præfatione commune, nullum prophetarum tam APERTE dixisse de Christo. Non enim solum scribit eum esse venturum, sed etiam QUO TEMPORE venturus fit docet; et reges PER ORDINEM digerit, et ANNOS enumerat, ac manifestissima signa prænunciat. Proëm. in lib. comm. Dan.*

phus,* gives *Daniel* a Superiority over the other Prophets of the *Old Testament*. *Aristotle* observes with his usual Accuracy and Penetration,† that “pretended Prophets express themselves in general Language. In a Game at Odd and Even,” he observes, “a Man may say, whether the Number be odd or even, much sooner than *what* it is : and that such a Thing *will* happen, than WHEN. Therefore our Oracle-Mongers never define WHEN.”

Nor must an acute Remark of *Cicero*’s to this Purpose be omitted. ‡ “If this be foretold, *who* is the PERSON meant, and *what* is the TIME ? The Writer has conducted himself so dextrously, that *any* event whatsoever will suit his *Prophecy*, since there is NO SPECIFICATION OF MEN AND TIMES.”

* Οὐ τὰ μελλοντα μόνον προφητεύων διελεῖ, καθάπερ καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι προφηταί, ἀλλὰ καὶ ΚΑΙΠΟΝ ΩΡΙΖΕΝ.

Ant. x. 11. 7.

† Rhet. iii. 4. 1. Ed. Oxon.

‡ Hoc si est in libris, in QUEM HOMINEM, et in QUOD TEMPUS est ? Callide enim, qui illa composuit, perfecit, ut, quodcumque accidisset, prædictum videretur, HOMINUM ET TEMPORUM DEFINITIONE SUBLATA : De Div. ii. 54.

Horace

Horace ridicules with great Humour the solemn and pompous Nothingness of the *Heathen Oracles* : *

“ Son of Laertes ! what I now foretel

“ Will either come to pass, or it will not :

“ For Phœbus’ self inspires my Oracles.”

My Argument upon this Point, in Behalf of the Gospels and the prophetic Character of our Saviour, would be sensibly affected, if the liberal Concession of Bishop HURD to *Pagan Divination* in his *fourth Sermon on Prophecy* were at all admissible. But to call the Predictions there specified *authentic, important, and circumstantial*, betrays, I think, such a Want of Judgement and good Sense, as might have ruined with some, the Credit of a less accomplished Writer. I, however, will not be disgusted with a few Blemishes amidst so much Excellence, and shall therefore neither repeat nor enlarge what I have said on this Subject in another Place. †

* Sat. ii. 5. 59.

O ! Laertiade, quicquid dicam, aut erit aut non ;
Divinare etenim magnus mihi donat Apollo.

† See my Commentary on St. Matthew, C. xxiv. V. 34.

REMARK XXIX.

Such a Circumstance as the following—

*Joseph of Arimathea went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the Body of Jesus. And Pilate marvelled, if he were already dead: **

—such a Circumstance, I say, as this no Historian of any Sagacity would have inserted, who was not conscious of its Truth and of an Integrity totally devoid of all Wish and Intention to deceive. A dextrous Impostor (and such a Forger of the Gospels *must* have been) had immediately discerned, that this Declaration of *Pilate's Wonder* at the *speedy* Diffolution of our Lord would encourage a Suspicion of some *Contrivance* and *Deception* in the Matter; and an Insinuation that one, who had never been *dead*, as was probable, might appear *again*, without any *Miracle*, to his Disciples. “Besides,” he would reason with himself, “why should *Jesus* expire “before the *two Malefactors*, who were crucified with him?”

* Mark xv. 43, 44.

And

And yet such satisfactory Reasons may be assigned for this Effect, as reflect, independent of all other Corroboration, the highest Probability on the Narrative.

Not to insist on an Opinion, which receives some Countenance from Scripture,* that *Jesus* was fastened to the Cross *before* the Robbers; his *earlier* Dissolution is sufficiently accounted for from the low State of Mind and Body, in which his extreme Agony in the Garden, and, doubtless, the frequent Anticipation of his Sufferings on other Occasions previous to that extraordinary Conflict, *must* have left him. It is unnecessary to look out for any *other* Reason: or we might infer upon probable Grounds, an *Imbecility* of Body and a *Delicacy* of Constitution, promoted or produced by a Life of Meditation and Abstinence, of Hardship and Fatigue.† The Solutions, which some Writers have given of this Difficulty, are dishonourable to our Lord, detrimental to the Evidences of *Christianity*, without Foundation, and shocking to Common-Sense.‡

REMARK

* See Matt. xxvii. 38.

† See Matt. viii. 20. John viii. 57.

‡ I rejoiced to understand, that Dr. Price's good Sense had led him to expunge from the *second Edition* of

REMARK XXX.

THE Backwardness, which the Disciples manifested, to believe the Resurrection of their Master, and the scrupulous Incredulity of *Thomas* in particular, are not only perfectly consistent with their Temper and Turn of Mind, as set forth in other Parts of their History, and on that Account probable from *Uniformity*; but derive a further Appearance of Veracity to the Historian, if we consider that a Forger of the Gospels would have apprehended some Detriment to his grand Object, the *Resurrection* of *Jesus*, from an Indisposition and Unwillingness in those, who knew him best, to acknowledge their Lord again. Such Frankness and Simplicity of Narrative are striking Presumptions of the *Reality* of this capital Event, which is the Corner-Stone

of his *Sermons* that stale, ignorant, and stupid Criticism on Matt. xxvii. 50. Such Acknowledgement of Errors, to which we are all liable, is exceedingly rare, but highly meritorious, and the invariable Concomitant of true Worth and Genius.

of

of *Christianity*; and indirectly prove the entire Conviction of the Apostles themselves, that our Lord had *expired* on the Cross. All the Circumstances of this Part of the Gospel History cannot fail to make a very considerable impression on every Reader of Impartiality and Discernment. There is a certain Limit to which an Impostor, aided by Ingenuity and Experience, may be allowed to proceed with little danger of Detection; but an undeviating Consistency with itself, and a strict Conformity to the Maxims of *Experience*, through a *circumstantial History* of a great *Variety* of *extraordinary Transactions*, is beyond his Ability, and only attainable by the honest Votary of TRUTH.

R E M A R K XXXI.

THERE occurs in the Gospel of St. *Luke* by far the noblest Specimen of what, by the Courtesy of *Criticism*, I would call the SUBLIMITY of SILENCE, that human Genius has been able to produce. Certainly Nothing but an actual Report from an *Eye-Witness* could have suggested such a grand and

and pathetic Image; an Image, that humbles the highest Flights of poetical Inspiration.

*And all the People, that came together to that Sight, beholding the Things which were done, smote their Breasts, and returned.**

Their Sensations were too big for Utterance!

The *fullen Silence* of *Ajax* in *Homer* is well known, and deservedly extolled by *Longinus*. I will quote *Virgil's* admirable Imitation of it, in *Mr. Pitt's* Translation, for the Entertainment of the Reader: which, however, falls very short of the Majesty of the Original.

“ Nought to these tender Words the Fair replies,
 “ But fixt on Earth her unrelenting Eyes,
 “ The Chief still weeping, with a fullen Mien,
 “ In steadfast Silence, frown'd th' obdurate Queen.
 “ Fixt as a Rock amidst the roaring Main,
 “ She hears him sigh, implore, and plead in vain.
 “ Then, where the Woods their thickest Shades display,
 “ From his detested Sight she shoots away.”

Nor will I let go the Opportunity of giving a little Variety to this Work by producing a delightful Passage of the same Kind

* Ch. xxiii. 48.

from

from the Father of Poetry, not noticed by the Critics.*

Achilles, after some other Conversation with *Ulysses* in the *Shades*, inquires after the Conduct of his Son. He received such an Account of his Bravery and Exploits, as could not fail to be highly acceptable to such a Father. The Effect of this Intelligence on *Achilles* is thus nobly imagined by the Poet.

“ I spake : Achilles straight, without reply,

“ Stalk’d o’er the yellow Mead of Asphodel

“ With Stride majestic ; flush’d with Joy to hear

“ Such glorious Feats of his intrepid Son.”

R E M A R K XXXII.

THE *Miracle* of the Conversion of *Water* into *Wine* is related with every Symptom of Veracity. The Easiness of the Narrative and the Probability of the several Circumstances accompanying the Miracle, must be either the Result of Truth and actual Observation,

* Hom. Od. A. 537.

Ως εφάμην· ψυχή δὲ ποδάμης· Αἰακίδαο

Φοῖβα, μακρὰ βίβωσα, καὶ ἀσφονδελὸν λειμῶνα,

Γηθοσύνη, ὃ δὲ υἱὸν εἶπεν ἀριδείκνυν εἶναι.

or the Achievement of the most ingenious and subtle Impostor, that ever exerted his Skill for the Deception of Mankind. If the latter Alternative be the more reasonable Supposition, it behoves our Adversaries to give some Account of this sagacious Plagiary; some little Insight into his Character—*who* he was—*when* and *where* he existed. Until a few Particulars of this Kind can be made out, they must indulge the Friends of Revelation in their Partiality for *the Cloud of Witnesses*, that encompass them; and in their Respect for those innumerable Marks of internal Probability, discoverable in the Scriptures of their Religion. Should the *Deist* call this Attachment to their Faith *puerile* and *irrational*, unworthy of a *philosophical* Turn of Mind; though Decency will not suffer us to oppose the Names of many now alive to this groundless and conceited Imputation, yet surely, without alledging any Instances from the *clerical* Profession, we may be allowed to cite the Names of BACON, NEWTON, LOCKE. In Competition with these Heroes of our Species, if the Dispute must be decided by the Preponderancy of *Genius* and *Accomplishments*, such
Men

Men as *Hume** and *Gibbon* are as *the small Dust of the Balance* against the *Mountains*;—as the faint Glimmerings of a Taper to the Effulgence of a mid-day Sun.

To return to the Subject of this *Remark*. † The Absence of all Contrivance and Collusion could not be more happily implied, than by the Manner, in which the Discovery is signified to the Company. The Servants alone were privy to the Process of the Mira-

* I have often been shocked and mortified at the Commendations, which Mr. *Hume* has received from such respectable Writers, on Account of his History. Of his other Qualities as a Historian I say Nothing: my present Concern is with his Stile. In a select Company of Friends I once asserted, that he was a WRETCHED WRITER. The Opinion was not admitted, and his Relation of the Massacre in *Ireland* was mentioned as a fine Specimen of Composition. It was immediately produced, and after a slight Dissection given up as truly pitiful. The Work is replete with miserable Examples of vicious Affectation and Want of Taste. I was happy to find such a Man as Mr. *Knax* of the same Judgement.—Of Mr. *Gibbon* I have given my Opinion in the Preface to a Work just published, a *New Translation of those Parts of the N. T. which are erroneous in our common Version*.

† John ii. 1—12.

cle;

cle; and were desired by *Jesus* to carry some of the new Wine to *the Governor of the Feast*. According to the usual Practice on those Occasions, mentioned too by the Governor, the Wine, which they had been drinking last, was not remarkable for its Excellence. His Attention was immediately excited by this fresh Supply, and he gives his Attestation to the Miracle in so natural and easy a Way, that I cannot but esteem it beyond the Reach of any Artifice and Ingenuity whatsoever. He called the Bridegroom, and said: *Every Man at the Beginning setteth forth good Wine, and when Men have well drunk, then that which is worse; but thou hast kept the good Wine until now.*

This incidental Testimony carries with it all the Air of Authenticity, which could possibly be derived from the unaffected Mention of such a Circumstance.

R E M A R K XXXIII.

THE Expulsion of *the Buyers and Sellers* from the Temple is such an extraordinary Transaction in itself, and so very different from

from the customary Conduct of our Saviour, that an Impostor of any Penetration and Address (and surely Prejudice itself will not deny a Forger of the Gospels *some* Portion of these Qualities) would have thought it Madness to leave *such* an Account, unaccompanied by any Allegations for the Behaviour of *Jesus*, and any Reasons for the implicit Deference of the *Traders*. No: it is the authentic Narrative of a Historian, conscious of the Truth, and no farther solicitous than to record it; confiding in the general Tenour of the History at large for Consistency and Corroboration.

A *Consciousness* in the Traders of the Indecency and Profanation of their Proceedings in prostituting *the Courts of the Lord's House* to the Accommodation of their worldly Purposes in so degrading a Manner, would not, I think, in itself account for this ready Acquiescence in our Lord's Conduct. Yet daily Experience is sufficient to certify the Advantage, which this Principle can give the weak over the strong. But, if we connect with this an Idea of his *miraculous* Power, all Difficulties will be removed; a beautiful Coherence is discovered, and the Attestation

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of a singular Event will accede to the *prophetic* Character of our Saviour. The whole Transaction appears to me most mysterious and perfectly unaccountable in any other View; but plain, and reasonable, and consistent, and satisfactory in this.

I discover another Mark of Simplicity and Truth, another Presumption against all collusive Management, in the different Relations, which the Evangelists have left of this Transaction; and of such Force, as, I flatter myself, cannot be resisted.

When our Saviour declares in the Narratives of *Matthew*, *Mark*, and *Luke*: *My House is the House of Prayer, but ye have made it a DEN OF THIEVES.** The Allusion is not made to a Nest of Robbers of any Description, but is particular and precise. By a *Den* is here meant the *Cavity of a Rock*, a *subterraneous Habitation*, or some such Place, where Robbers were accustomed to secrete the CATTLE, which they had stolen. I cannot better illustrate my Meaning and the Pertinency of the Appellation, than by producing a passage from *Virgil*, immediately to the

* Matt. xxi. 13. Mark ix. 17. Luke xix. 46.

Purpose, in which the *Cave* and *Rapine* of *Cacus* is described.*

“ Alcides came, and here his spacious Herds
 “ Spread o’er the Valley and the River’s Bank.
 “ On Wiles and Mischief Cacus still intent
 “ Four beauteous HEIFERS and four stately BULLS
 “ By Fraud drives off; and, that no Steps direct
 “ Might indicate their Course, he backward drags
 “ His struggling Plunder to his GLOOMY DEN.”

Now I maintain, that the Phrase *a Den of Thieves* is perfectly unintelligible as it is related by these *three* Evangelists, because there is Nothing in the Context, that can lead to an Explanation of it. We must have Recourse to St. *John’s* Relation for Satisfaction upon this Point; which is this :

* *Æn.* VIII. 203.

*Alcides Aderat, taurosque hâc viâdor ugebat
 Ingentes : vallemque boves amnemque tenebant.
 At furiis Caci mens effera, ne quid inausum
 Aut intratatum scelerisve dolive fuisset,
 Quatuor à stabulis præstanti corpore tauros
 Avertit, totidè formâ superante juvenas :
 Atque hos, ne qua forent pedibus vestigia rectis
 Caudâ in speluncam tractos, versisque viarum
 Indiciis raptos, saxo occultabat opaco.*

This just Explanation of *a Den of Thieves*, if I mistake not, is Mr. *Markland’s* : a Man of true Simplicity of Mind, adorned by a sound Judgement and exquisite Learning.

*He drove them all out of the Temple, and the SHEEP and the OXEN. **

Here is the Key to this *Den of Thieves*, dropped indeed very incidentally, as it should seem, and without Design: for it is extremely observable, that our Saviour's Charge in this Evangelist is not — *Make not my Father's House a DEN OF THIEVES* — but — *Make not my Father's House a HOUSE OF MERCHANDIZE*. — So then those Historians, who employ the Expression, leave it wholly unintelligible in it's proper Acceptation; and that Historian, on the other Hand, who had actually given the Explanation, does not use the Phrase. Now I defy any Man to imagine a more decisive and unequivocal Proof of Persons writing from the Simplicity of their Hearts, without the slightest Symptom of Artifice and Contrivance, — without the least Appearance of any Solicitude beyond a plain Narration of the Truth, — than what a Comparison of our Evangelists exhibits in this Instance. The Conclusion is obvious: the Evidence is not to be withstood.

* C. ii. V. 15.

REMARK

REMARK XXXIV.

IF a Lover of the Gospel should reflect on the *cowardly Disposition* of the *Apostles*, to which they gave so unequivocal a Testimony by forsaking their Master in his last Extremity, and consulting Nothing but their own Preservation, and on their *Forwardness* and *Intrepidity* within a *few Days* after; it is not improbable, that some Emotions of Embarrassment and Mistrust may arise from a Transition apparently too sudden to be conformable to human Nature upon any assignable Operations of the Mind. But a PERSUASION OF THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST upon the Evidence of their SENSES was an adequate Cause for so great an Alteration, and furnishes a complete Solution of the Problem. THIS was that ADVOCATE, who would defend these uneloquent and unlearned *Galileans* with such Strength of Argument, such Efficacy of Conviction, before *Rulers*, and *Kings*, and *Councils*:* — THIS was

* Mark xiii. 9.

that *Mouth and Wisdom*, which all the Power, and Policy, and Malice of their *Adversaries* would be unable to gainsay and resist.* Observe the Ground, upon which *Peter* and *John* build their determined Resolution to preach the Gospel in Spite of every Impediment. *We cannot, say they, but speak the Things, which we have SEEN and HEARD.*†

And this constitutes the ESSENTIAL DISTINCTION between the Testimony of the *Apostles*, and the Case of those, who have laid down their Lives for the Truth in *other* Instances, and in the succeeding Ages of *Christianity*. On one Side, Martyrdom was the Result of a particular Persuasion, according to the different Ideas of the Individual, derived from the written Records of the Gospel, respecting Transactions unknown to them through any other Medium; liable therefore to endless Diversity, and consequently to endless *Error* and *Misconception*. On the other Side, Martyrdom attended a Conviction of what had been HEARD and SEEN, and HANDLED *of the Word of Life*:‡ where there was, therefore, no POSSIBILITY

* Luke xxi. 15. † Acts iv. 20.

‡ 1 John i. 1.

of *Misapprehension* and *Mistake*. We have, in one Case, if I may so speak, the Exemplification of an *Axiom*: in the other, no more than a *theoretical* Demonstration of *Sincerity*.

R E M A R K XXXV.

THE *Miracles* both of the *Old* and *New Testament*, if they carry with them Nothing absurd and contradictory, Nothing inconsistent with our most improved Conceptions of the divine Administration; the *Miracles*, I say, of Revelation, proclaim their own *Authenticity*, upon this plain Principle;—that no MAN, conversant only with the Occurrences of common Life, could have *originally* entertained Ideas so unauthorised by Experience, and incapable of Admission into the Mind without the Interference of some extraneous Impression. Nay, I will express the Proposition in still stronger Terms. The very SINGULARITY of the Subject is, in many Cases, a HIGH PRESUMPTION of the REALITY of the Transaction.

Herodotus informs us,* that "Necho, King
 " of *Egypt*, sent some *Phœnicians* on a naval
 " Expedition with Orders to sail through
 " the Pillars of *Hercules* into the Northern
 " Sea, and so return to *Ægypt*. The *Phœ-*
 " *nicians* accordingly set Sail from the Red-
 " Sea towards the South. In Autumn they
 " went on Shore, sowed their Seed, waited
 " for the Return of Harvest, and then pro-
 " ceeded on their Voyage. Thus they went
 " on for two successive Years; and on the
 " third Year turned in at the Pillars of
 " *Hercules*, and came to *Ægypt*. They
 " brought back a strange Account, perfectly
 " INCREDIBLE TO ME, another may believe it,
 " if he pleases; that, when they sailed round
 " *Libya*, THEY HAD THE SUN ON THEIR
 " RIGHT HAND."

It is evident to a Demonstration, that
 these *Phœnicians* did actually perform this
 Expedition; that they passed beyond the *Line*
 and the *Southern Tropic*. But such a strange
 Idea of going *beyond the Sun*, which, we see,

* L. iv. Sect. 42. Which I suppose is the earliest
 Account upon Record of the doubling of the *Cape of*
Good Hope, about six hundred Years before the *Christian*
Era.

gained no Credit with our grave Historian, who is not, however, remarkable on some Occasions for a stubborn Incredulity; such an Idea, I say, as this could not be a mere Fiction of the Sailors;—it could originate in no other Source but *actual Experiment* and *ocular Observation*.

Of this Kind is that remarkable *Phænomenon*, related by *three* Evangelists, the *Transfiguration* of *Jesus* upon the Mount: which the Deist, perhaps, like the *prudent* Historian, will not choose to credit; though, like him also, he may believe a Multitude of other strange Things, against *all* Reason and Probability. As Philosophy and Experience have vindicated the Character of these *Phœnician* Sailors against the Insinuations of their Journalist; so we are convinced, that sound Reason and probable Deduction will bear us out in our Belief of the *Miracles* of Scripture against the Objections of our ablest and most insidious Opponents,

R E M A R K XXXVI.

BUT the whole *New Testament* does not record a more extraordinary Fact, than that,
which

which St. *John* declares was exhibited under his own Inspection.

*But, when they came to Jesus, and saw, that he was dead already, they brake not his Legs. But one of the Soldiers with a Spear pierced his Side, and forthwith came thereout BLOOD AND WATER. And he who saw it, beareth Record, and his Record is true.**

Dr. *Hunter's* preliminary Dissertation to his *anatomical Lectures* sufficiently shews the very imperfect Knowledge of Anatomy in Ages long posterior to the Days of *Christ*. And it cannot be thought, that an Impostor would hazard an Assertion respecting an Operation, which, could it be supposed to enter into his Mind at all, (and that were little less than an *Effect* without a *Cause*) greater Experience and maturer Information might have proved to be absurd, or even impossible. Stronger Evidence cannot be desired of a Case like this. Its Reality is unquestionable. It will stand to the End of Time an irrefragable Demonstration of *John's* Veracity, and of the Authority of his Gospel.

* C. xix. V. 33—36.

The Effect here described, the Flowing out of *Blood and Water*, is a decided Proof, that *Jesus* was *actually dead*; and, therefore, that he could not shew himself *alive* to his Disciples afterwards but by a *Resurrection* from the Grave: which is the Foundation, as I have before observed, that supports the whole Fabric of the *Christian* Revelation. This Appearance, I say, was a *Proof* of *Death*. The *Water*, mentioned by our Evangelist, was the *lymphatic Fluid* from the *Pericardium* and the intermediate Parts, which could not fail to be considerably lacerated by the Passage of such a Weapon, as a *Roman* Spear. Had any Life still remained in our Saviour's Body, and the Circulation of the Blood not yet ceased, so great an Effusion must have taken Place, as would have prevented all Discrimination of the *Lymph*, that issued with it. The Transaction is wonderfully striking in every View, and replete with Evidence and Conviction.

Under this *Remark* I shall take an Opportunity of explaining from this Text a most remarkable Passage in the *Epistles* of the same Author, upon which I presume the Reader would have Recourse in vain for Satisfaction

to

to any Commentator, and which receives immediate Illustration and Certainty from the preceding Observations.

The Passage here meant is 1 John v. 8. and should be thus translated:

And there are three, which bear Witness on the Earth; the BREATH, and the WATER, and the BLOOD: and the End of these three is one.

The Circumstance, which is proved by these three Things in Conjunction—the *Breath*—the *Water*—and the *Blood*—is THE DEATH OF CHRIST. Our Evangelist had said, * *that Jesus gave up his BREATH.* But we all know, that Life is recoverable in many Instances after *Respiration* ceases. The *Breath* alone, therefore, would not bear effectual *Witness*. But the Concurrence of the *Water* and the *blood* makes the Testimony quite complete, and constitutes an undeniable Demonstration of the Cessation of Existence.

Hence also we might explain the *sixth* Verse of the same *Chapter* in this *Epistle*; but this is not the Place for Criticisms of such a Nature, nor indeed does the present Generation seem much interested on that *unimportant* Subject, the *Explanation* of the *Scriptures*.

* John xix. 30.

With a most exquisite Observation of our Lord himself I shall close these *Remarks* on the *internal Evidences* of the *Christian Revelation*.

But all these Things will they do unto you for my Name's Sake, BECAUSE THEY KNOW NOT HIM THAT SENT ME.*

In other Words; IGNORANCE and VICE are the GRAND ENEMIES OF REVELATION. Just Sentiments of the SUPREME BEING and a *rational System of natural Religion* will invariably conduct an ingenuous Inquirer to *Christianity*; a truly *moral* Dispensation of Faith and Practice, which continues to gain an Accession of Evidence (which is a most striking Consideration) in Proportion to the *Improvements* of *Philosophy* and the *Advancement* of the *human Understanding*. Whether there be such a Person as a *virtuous* and *conscientious Deist*, who has examined with a dispassionate Attention *all* the Evidences of the Gospel, is a Question, to which *I* should not hesitate to give an Answer, upon the Authority of JESUS CHRIST.

* John xv. 21.

T H E E N D.